

Sūrah An-Nūr

(The Light)

Sūrah An-Nūr was revealed in Madīnah and it has 64 Verses and 9 sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 2

سُورَةُ أَنْزَلْنَاهَا وَفَرَضْنَاهَا وَأَنْزَلْنَا فِيهَا آيَاتٍ لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١﴾ الزَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِي فَاجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ وَلَا تَأْخُذْكُمْ بِهِمَا رَأْفَةٌ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ وَلْيَشْهَدْ عَذَابَهُمَا طَائِفَةٌ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢﴾

This is a Sūrah We have sent down and prescribed and sent down in it clear signs, so that you may receive the advice. [1]

The fornicating woman and the fornicating man, flog each one of them with one hundred stripes. And no pity for them should withhold you from (complying with) Allah's religion, if you really believe in Allah and the Last Day. And a group of believers must witness their punishment. [2]

Some Characteristics of this Sūrah

This Sūrah generally deals with those rules of Shari'ah which aim at preserving chastity and enjoin *ḥijāb* for women. These rules end up with the punishment prescribed for *zinā* (adultery or fornication). The previous Sūrah (Al-Mu'minūn) had spelt out the basic qualities necessary for attainment of success in this world and in the Hereafter. One of these qualities was to guard one's private parts against illicit sexual acts (verse

4 of that Sūrah). Now the present Sūrah describes the detailed rules meant to acquire this quality. That is why the women are especially directed to learn this Sūrah. Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ issued a directive to people of Kūfah in which he advised them to teach Sūrah An-Nūr to women.

Commentary

The first verse of this Sūrah is introductory preface to put extra emphasis to the commands given in it. The very first command after that is regarding punishment for adultery, which has a direct bearing on the intent of the Sūrah - that is to preserve chastity, even of the eyes. The subjects of control on casting eyes and not to enter houses without permission are to follow soon. Commitment of adultery is the ultimate outcome when one ignores all types of prudence against continence and is an open rebellion against Divine precepts. Therefore, the punishment for adultery in Islam is most severe as compared to all other punishments prescribed by the Qur'ān for the crimes committed by human beings. Adultery, being a big crime by itself, also brings along with it many other crimes, the result of which is destruction of the entire social order. If the causes of killings and atrocities are probed deeply, the majority of them will appear to be caused due to illegitimate relationship with women. It is for this reason that in order to eliminate completely this heinous crime, its Islamic punishment has been described in the opening verses.

Adultery is a great crime and is a combination of many crimes.

That is why its punishment in Islam is very severe

The Holy Qur'ān and *mutawātir aḥadīth* on their own have fixed the punishments of four crimes. They are not left at the discretion of the judge or the ruler. These punishments are called *Hudūd* in the terminology of Islamic jurisprudence. Apart from these, the punishment is not fixed for other crimes, and the ruler or the judge can award the punishment in accordance with the type of crime, the circumstances of the criminal and the background in which the crime is committed, in order to control the spread of crime as he feels best. Such punishments are known as penal laws in Islamic jurisprudence. Islamic *Hudūds* are four in number:

(1). Stealing

(2). Leveling false accusation against chaste women.

(3). Drinking liquor

(4). Adultery

Each one of these crimes is very evil in its own right, and while disturbing the peace and tranquility of the society contribute toward other ills of the world at large. However, the ill effects and consequences of adultery are so immense in their destruction of the human values that no other crime can perhaps compete with it.

(1) Molestation of someone's wife, daughter or sister is nothing but his destruction. For a noble man it is not as bad to lose all his material wealth and belongings as to lose the chastity of his women folk. It is for this reason that often we come across such incidents that people whose women folk are molested get after the life of the molester without caring for their own lives. This passion for revenge passes on to the generations and results in the destruction of families after families.

(2) In a community where illicit sexual acts become rampant the family lineage is lost. When the sanctity of relationship with mother, daughter and sister is vanished, with whom the marriage is forbidden, then one can marry them as well, which is even a greater crime than adultery.

(3) If we analyze the causes of disorder and disturbance the world over, we will note that in most cases the root cause is woman and to a lesser degree the wealth. Only those rules can guarantee the worldly peace which safeguard the woman and wealth in a befitting manner and do not allow them to cross the appointed limits. It is not the intention to highlight here the ills and evils of adultery. The points mentioned above are enough for the human society to know the destructive ills of this act. This is why Islam has fixed the punishment of adultery as more severe than the punishments of all other crimes. The punishment has been described in the verse in the following words:

الرَّانِيَةُ وَالرَّانِي فَاجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ

The fornicating woman and the fornicating man, flog each one of them with one hundred stripes - 24:2.

First the fornicating woman is mentioned and then the fornicating man. The punishment for both is the same. The common practice about

injunctions is that mostly the command is conveyed by addressing the men-folk only and the women are included in that by implication. It is not regarded necessary that they be addressed separately. In the whole of Qur'an masculine gender is used for passing the injunctions through the phrase **يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا** and women-folk are regarded as included in that. Perhaps the wisdom is that as Allah Ta'ālā has ordained the women-folk to keep themselves covered, in the same way their mention is kept covert in the context of mankind. But here there was a possibility that some might have the confusion that all these injunctions relate to men only and the women are free from them. Therefore, in some specific verses the women-folk are also mentioned alongside separately like in the verse **اقْمِنِ الزَّكَاةَ وَالصَّلَاةَ وَأَتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ** (33:33). Moreover, where both men and women are to be mentioned then the natural order is that first the men are mentioned and then women. In the case of punishment for stealing, the same order is maintained in the injunction **أَسَارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوا أَيْدِيَهُمَا** (As for a man or woman who commits theft, cut off the hands of both - 5:38) where the male thief is mentioned first and then the female thief. But in the case of punishment for adultery only an incidental mention of women was not considered enough, instead a specific reference was regarded necessary. Secondly, mention of the women is given priority over men. There are many points of wisdom in this. First, the women are regarded weaker sex and compassionate for their physique; if they were not mentioned specifically, one could have had the misgiving that perhaps the women are exempt from this punishment. The mention of woman is preceded because the act of adultery is so impudent that its commitment from her side could be carried out only by extreme fearlessness and carelessness, because the nature has bestowed in her character instinctive shyness and an urge to guard her chastity. The nature has provided many a things for the safety of women. Hence commitment of fornication from her side is more grave than from man. As against this, in the case of theft it is a bigger crime for men who are bestowed with strength by Allah Ta'ālā, so that they earn their living from the bounty He has provided. The man is required to take advantage of Allah's bounty by working for the sustenance and not stealing for the living, as this is a great shame and sin for him. Since the women do not have the same circumstances, if they commit theft their crime will be of a lesser degree as compared to that of men.

فَاجْلِدُوا (24:2) Meaning of the word جَلَد is to hit with the whip, and it is derived from the word جِلْد (leather). As the whip is normally made of leather, some commentators have suggested that by the use of word جَلَد it is alluded that the strike of the whip should be so moderate that it should be felt only within the skin and not deeper into the flesh. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had himself urged that the punishment of whipping be exercised with moderation, so that neither it is so hard that it tears off the flesh nor so mild that it does not hurt at all. On this point some commentators have reproduced *ahadith* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ with their chain of narrators.

The punishment of whipping a hundred times is exclusive to unmarried man and woman. For married persons the punishment is stoning to death

This point is worth noting that the injunctions on adultery were revealed gradually and moved on from a lighter punishment to a more severe one, like the gradual prohibition of alcohol which is mentioned in the Qur'an itself, the details of which have been described earlier. The very first injunction on adultery is the one given in verses 15 and 16 of Sūrah An-Nisā', which is:

وَالَّتِي يَأْتِيَنَّ الْفَاحِشَةَ مِنْ نِسَائِكُمْ فَاسْتَشْهَدُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةً مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ شَهِدُوا فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ فِي الْبُيُوتِ حَتَّى يَتَوَفَّيَهُنَّ الْمَوْتُ أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلًا. وَالَّذَانِ يَأْتِيَاهُمَا مِنْكُمْ فَأَذُوهُمَا فَإِنْ تَابَا وَأَصْلَحَا فَأَعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا.

And those of your women who commit the shameful act, then have four witnesses against them from among you. So, if they do testify, then confine those women to their homes until death overcomes them or Allah prescribes a way for them. [15] And those two of you who commit it, torture them both. But if they repent and amend, turn away from them. Surely, Allah is Most-Relenting, Very-Merciful. (4:15, 16)

Detailed commentary and explanation of the above two verses is given under Sūrah An-Nisā'. They are repeated here so that preliminary stage of the punishment of fornication is kept in mind. In these verses the proof for establishing adultery is described with a specific condition of having four male witnesses. Secondly, punishment for the woman is prescribed as to confine her within the home and for both of them inflicting of harm. At the same time it is also hinted that this was not the final injunction on

adultery and that some more directives will follow. This is the meaning of *أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلًا* (or Allah prescribes a way for them - 4:15).

In the above referred punishment confinement of the women within the homes was regarded sufficient at that time, and causing harm to both as enough punishment. But the limit, the magnitude and the form of harm to be inflicted was not defined. Rather the wordings of the Qur'an suggest that the initial punishment of adultery was only punitive, of which the quantum was not fixed by the Sharī'ah a *ta'zir* (a punishment left to the discretion of a judge), but was left at the discretion of the ruler or the judge. That is why the ambiguous phrase of inflicting harm or torture was adopted. But at the same time it was hinted that probably some other form of punishment for the culprits of the crime will be introduced later by saying *أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلًا* (4:15). When the present verse of Sūrah an-Nūr was revealed, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said that what was promised in Sūrah An-Nisā' through *أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلًا* "or Allah prescribes a way for them", so now this verse of Sūrah an-Nūr has prescribed the way, that is flogging both man and woman with a hundred stripes. And then Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه made the punishment of hundred stripes exclusive to fornication, that is when the crime is committed by unmarried man and woman, and said:

الرَّجْمُ لِلثَّيْبِ وَالْجُلْدُ لِلْبَكَرِ

It is prescribed that if the married man and woman commit this crime then they be stoned to death, and the punishment for unmarried culprit is a hundred stripes. (Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, Kitāb ut-Tafsīr p. 657)

In the verse of Sūrah an-Nūr under reference punishment for adultery is given as a hundred stripes without qualification. So, it is obvious that he must have found from some other authentic Ḥadīth that the punishment for adultery is stoning to death and for fornication a hundred stripes, and that Ḥadīth has been related by Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Musnād Aḥmad, Sunnan Nasa'ī, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Ubādah Ibn Ṣāmit رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

خذوا عني خذوا عني قد جعل الله لهن سبيلا، البكر بالبكر جلد مائة وتغريب عام،
والثيب بالثيب جلد مائة والرجم (ابن كثير)

Have knowledge from me, have knowledge from me that Allah Ta'ālā has prescribed now the 'way for women' (that He had promised before), which is that for unmarried man and woman is a hundred stripes and exile for one year, and for married man and woman it is a hundred stripes and stoning.

Alongwith the punishment of a hundred stripes for the unmarried man and woman prescribed in the an-Nūr verse there is an additional punishment mentioned in the Ḥadīth to send the adulterer man in exile for one year. On this there is a difference of opinion among jurists, that is whether the punishment of exile to male adulterer is compulsory or it is at the discretion of the judge - that is if he deems it necessary only then send the criminal in exile also for one year. In the opinion of Imām A'zam Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى this last referred position is correct, that is, it remains at the discretion of the ruler or judge. Secondly, according to this Ḥadīth there is the punishment of a hundred stripes also for the married man and woman before the stoning. But in accordance with other *aḥādīth* and the actions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the first four Caliphs, it is established that these two punishments are not to be combined.

Married persons are to be awarded the punishment of stoning only. The main point to be noted in this Ḥadīth is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has explained here the verse of Surah An-Nisa' *أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلًا* (or Allah prescribes a way for them) and while explaining he had added some more points beside flogging a hundred stripes as stated in Sūrah an-Nūr. These points are:

1. - punishment of hundred stripes is exclusive to unmarried man and woman.
2. - An addition of one year's exile.
3. - Rajm or stoning to death of married man and woman.

It is but obvious that the additions made by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the verse of Surah an-Nūr was also on the command of Allah Ta'ālā *إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ* (This is naught but a revelation revealed - 53:4). For the Messenger, and for those who hear from him directly, both the revelations which are recited in the form of Qur'ān and those which are not recited have equal sanctity. The Holy Prophet ﷺ himself had acted upon this rule (punishment of stoning to married adulterer) in the presence of many

of his companions. He awarded the punishment of *rajm* or stoning to Mā'iz and Ghāmiḍiyah which is recorded in all the books of traditions with authentic authorities. Additionally, an incident is reported in the authentic traditions books on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah and Zaid Ibn Khālīd Juhanī رضي الله عنهما that an unmarried man committed adultery with a married woman whose servant he was. The father of the adulterer boy brought him before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The incident was proved by his admission. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: لا قضين بينكما بكتاب الله that is I will adjudge your case according to the Book of Allah. He then adjudicated that the unmarried adulterer boy be flogged with a hundred stripes and the married woman is stoned, and directed Sayyidnā Unais ؓ to execute the punishment, who took the confessional statement of the woman, and then the punishment was carried out on the orders of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (Ibn Kathīr)

According to above tradition, the Holy Prophet ﷺ awarded the punishment of hundred stripes to one criminal and of stoning to the other and described them both as the judgment by the Book of Allah; although in Sūrah An-Nūr only the punishment of hundred stripes is indicated and there is no mention of stoning. The reason is the same that Allah Ta'ālā had revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ the complete explanation and details of the injunction which all fall within the purview of the Book of Allah, although some of it is not included and mentioned in the Sūrah an-Nūr expressly. Bukhārī and Muslim have recorded an address of Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, the wordings of which are:

قال عمر بن الخطاب رضي الله عنه، وهو جالس على منبر رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: ان الله بعث محمدا صلى الله عليه وسلم بالحق وانزل عليه الكتاب، فكان مما انزل الله عليه اية الرجم قرأناها وعينناها وعقلناها، فرجم رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ورجمنا بعده، فاخشى ان طال بالناس زمان ان يقول قائل ما نجد الرجم في كتاب الله تعالى فيضلوا بترك فريضة انزلها الله، وان الرجم في كتاب الله حق على من زنا اذا احصن من الرجال والنساء اذا قامت البينة او كان الحبل او الاعتراف. (مسلم ص ٦٥، ج ٢)

Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ؓ said while he was sitting on the pulpit of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that Allah sent Muḥammad ﷺ with truth and revealed to him the Book. So, whatever is revealed to him includes the verse of stoning (رجم) as well,

which we have read, memorized and understood. Now I fear that with the passage of time one might say that we do not find the injunction of *rajm* (stoning) in the Book of Allah, and hence go astray by not following a religious obligation, which is revealed by Allah. And be clear in your mind that the injunction of stoning (*rajm*) is ordained upon the one, whether man or woman, who is married (محسن) and when the evidence of adultery is established or there is a confession or pregnancy .

The same version is narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī also with greater detail (Bukhārī 1009 vol.2) and in Nasai' it is narrated in the following words:

انا لانجد من الرجم بدءا، فانه حد من حدود الله، الا وان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قد رجم ورجمنا بعده، ولولا ان يقول قائلون ان عمر زاد في كتاب الله ماليس فيه لكتبت في ناحية المصحف، وشهد عمر بن الخطاب وعبد الرحمن بن عوف وفلان وفلان ان رسول الله ﷺ رجم ورجمنا بعده. الحديث (ابن كثير)

We have no choice to avoid the punishment of stoning (*rajm*), because it is one of the punishment (حد) from the punishments prescribed by Allah. Be very clear in your mind that the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself had awarded stoning and we too have awarded stoning after him. If there was no risk of people saying that 'Umar has added something on his own in the Book of Allah, I would have written this in a corner of the Qur'ān. And 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ؓ is witness, 'Abdurrahmān ؓ is witness and so and so companions are witnesses that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had awarded stoning. (Ibn Kathīr)

This is apparently proved by the address of Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ that there is a specific verse on injunction of stoning which is in addition to the verse under reference of Sūrah an-Nūr. But Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ did not tell the wordings of that verse, nor did he tell that if there is a separate verse beside the verse of Sūrah an-Nūr why it is not included in the Qur'ān, and why it is not recited. He only said that if there was no risk involved that people would put blame on him of making addition in the Book of Allah, he would have written this verse on a corner of the Qur'ān. (al-Nasai')

What needs careful consideration in this narration is that, if it is a verse of the Qur'ān and its recitation is mandatory like other verses, then why Sayyidna 'Umar ؓ left it out just because of the fear of people's calumny; when he is well known for his vehemence about Allah's

injunctions. The other point to be noted is that he did not say that he would have included this verse in the Qur'ān, but all he said was he would have written it on the margin of the Qur'ān.

All these things support the inference that the explanation of this verse that Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ heard from the Holy Prophet ﷺ in which he specified the punishment of hundred stripes for unmarried man and woman and stoning for the married persons. He treated it as a verse of the Book of Allah because of the words of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his consistent practice. Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ understood fully well that the Holy Prophet's ﷺ explanation was in line with the command of Allah's Book and not actually the verse of the Book, otherwise no power on earth would have stopped him to write down the verse in its place if it was missed out. His comment about writing it on the margin of Qur'ān is further proof that the verse was not a part of Qur'ān but only the explanation of the verse of Sūrah an-Nūr. Some narrations have carried the actual wordings of the injunction on the subject, but they fall short of proof and authenticity to merit inclusion in the Qur'ān. The jurists (فقهاء) who have related this verse as abrogated for recitation but not abrogated as a command have done so by way of an example, and as such it does not in fact prove that it is a part of the Qur'ān.

The gist of the matter is that the punishment of hundred stripes described in Sūrah an-Nūr for adulterer man and woman is exclusive to unmarried man and woman as per detailed explanation and elucidation of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and punishment for the married persons is *rajm* (stoning). Although this elucidation is not given in the wordings of the verse but the exalted person to whom this verse was revealed has himself elaborated the subject without the slightest doubt of any confusion. It is not that the Holy Prophet ﷺ explained this only through his words, but he also executed this punishment several times in the presence of many companions, and the proof of this has reached us with unbroken authentic chain of narrators. Therefore, the punishment of stoning for married man and woman is in fact an injunction of the Book of Allah itself, in the sense that it is as certain as any other injunction of the Qur'ān. This fact may be mentioned either by saying that *rajm* is a provision of the Qur'ān itself, or by saying that it is established by the unbroken chain of traditions. Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ has also said the same

thing that the verdict of stoning is established by the tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

An important warning

Wherever words married and unmarried appear in the above explanation, they are used for ease of explanation. The actual words used in the saying are *بكر* and *تيب* or *غيرمُحْصَن*. The real position of *مُحْصَن* in Islamic jurisprudence is of the one who has copulated with the spouse with an authentic Nikah, and is also sane. Whenever we have used the words 'married' in this context, it carries the same meaning. It is only for brevity and ease that the word 'married' has been used.

Three degrees of gradations in the punishment of adultery

On pondering over the verses of the Qur'ān and the *aḥadīth* referred to above, it becomes clear that initially the punishment of fornication was light in that the judge or the ruler was to afflict pain to the perpetrator (man and woman) of the crime at his own discretion, and confine the woman in the home. This punishment was enjoined in Sūrah An-Nisā'. The second period was that when the verse of Sūrah an-Nūr was revealed in which hundred stripes each to both were enjoined. The third period was the one when the Holy Prophet ﷺ instructed after the revelation of the verse under discussion that the punishment of hundred stripes will be restricted only to those who are not married, but if married man and woman commit this crime then their punishment is stoning (*rajm*).

In Islamic law if the punishment of a crime is severe, the conditions of proving it are also tough

As described above, the punishment of adultery in Islam is most severe compared to punishments of all other crimes. Alongwith that the conditions to prove this crime are equally tough in Islamic law. If there is the slightest doubt or uncertainty, then the maximum punishment, known as *ḥadd* (حد), is remitted, and only a punishment by way of *ta'zīr* may be awarded which should be commensurate with the extent of crime. In all other cases testimony of two men or one man and two women is required for the proof of a particular event. However, for the maximum punishment of fornication (حدزنا) the evidence, of four male eye-witnesses is necessary who must testify without a slightest doubt or confusion. Another severe circumstance that aggravates the severity of an evidence of fornication is that if the evidence of a witness in a case of adultery is

rejected, then the witness himself may suffer badly, because in that case, he may be charged for false accusation of adultery (زُف) and may be awarded the punishment of eighty stripes. Therefore, no one will dare testify the fornication where there's even slightest degree of doubt. However, if the adultery is not proved clearly by eye witnesses, but there is proven evidence of a man and woman found in a compromising and unlawful position, then the judge can award the punishment by way of *ta'zīr* which stripes as are suitable in that particular case. Details of the punishment for fornication and its conditionalities can be seen in the books of Fiqh.

Injunction against homosexuality and sex with animals

The issue that if a man indulges in sexual act with a man or an animal, whether his act falls within the purview of fornication or not, and whether its punishment is the same as that of fornication has already been dealt with under the commentary of Sūrah An-Nisā'. Although this act is not called fornication neither lexically nor in the terminology of Sharī'ah and hence punishment of fornication is not applied to that, but its punishment is no less in its severity compared to punishment of fornication. The noble Companions رضي الله عنهم punished such culprits by burning them alive.

لَا تَأْخُذْكُمْ بِهِمَا رَأْفَةٌ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ

No pity for them should withhold you from (complying with)
Allah's religion - 24:2.

Since the punishment for adultery is very severe and there is the possibility that those awarding the punishment may feel pity and be lenient, hence, it is also enjoined that in the fulfillment of this important religious duty any compassion is not permissible. Pity or mercy and forgiveness or pardon are always laudable, but any compassion shown to criminals will result in injustice to the entire humanity; hence it is prohibited and not permissible.

وَلْيَشْهَدْ عَذَابَهُمَا طَائِفَةٌ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

And a group of believers must witness their punishment. - 24:2

At the time of execution of the punishment of fornication a group of Muslims should be present to watch. It is customary in Islam to execute

all punishments, specially the *ḥudūd*, in public, so that those who see it take a warning. But the directive for the presence of a group of Muslims at the time of execution of punishment for fornication is peculiar to this punishment.

Initially Islam requires not to publicize the crimes, but once they are established through evidence, it is the requirement of wisdom to disgrace the criminals

For the control of vulgarity and shamelessness Islamic laws have imposed far reaching restrictions. It is made obligatory for women to cover themselves. Men are asked to lower their eyes on seeing women-folk. The sound of jewelry or the singing of women are prohibited as they may lead to wanton acts. However, if someone is seen wanting in adopting Islamic teachings, he should be guided in private, but is not allowed to be disgraced. But if someone has crossed all limits and has broken all the ties with Islamic laws, and his crime is established in accordance with the Islamic jurisprudence, then keeping his crime secret might embolden others for committing this crime. Hence, the extent to which Islam has cared for avoiding publicity of the crime, to the same extent the emphasis is laid in making it public for disgracing the culprits, once the crime is established. It is for this reason that not only the punishment for adultery is enjoined to be executed publicly, but the presence of a group of Muslims at the time of execution is also made mandatory.

Verse 3

الزَّانِي لَا يَنْكِحُ إِلَّا زَانِيَةً أَوْ مُشْرِكَةً وَالزَّانِيَةُ لَا يَنْكِحُهَا إِلَّا زَانٍ أَوْ مُشْرِكٌ ۖ وَحَرَّمَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٣﴾

A man who is fornicator does not (like to) marry but a woman who is a fornicator or a polytheist. And a woman who is a fornicator does not (like to) marry but a man who is a fornicator or a polytheist. And this (i.e. preferring to marry such spouses) has been prohibited for the believers. [3]

Commentary

The second injunction about fornication

The first injunction was regarding the punishment of fornication,

which has been described in the previous verse. The second injunction is about marrying the men or women who have committed adultery. Alongside the marriage with polytheist man and woman is also described. The commentators have given different views while explaining this verse, but the simplest and safe meaning is that fornication is an obnoxious act, and as such whoever indulges in this act loses his character and taste, and is attracted towards persons of the same character, and likes to marry them.

The objective of this verse, according to this interpretation, is not part of an injunction, but merely to describe a fact of life, normally seen in every day life. This is a reflection on the filthy act of fornication, and its far reaching detrimental and evil effects. In other words, the verse says that fornication is a poison to ethics, and its poisonous effects ruin the moral behavior of man. He stops differentiating between good and bad, and develops a liking for evil things. He does not bother about permissible (حلال) and prohibited (حرام). Any woman that he fancies for is with the purpose of fornication, and hence he tries to cajole her into the shameful act. If he fails in his advances, only then agrees for the marriage under compulsion. But he does not really like the marriage, because he finds the objects of marriage, such as being faithful to wife, produce virtuous children and take charge of all her needs and alimony for life, a burden and nuisance for him. Since such a person does not have any concern with the marriage, his inclination is not restricted towards Muslim women but is as much for polytheist women. If a polytheist woman lays the condition of marital bond for fulfilling her religious obligation, then he would agree for the marriage as well to meet his desire, without having regard that such a marriage has no sanctity and is not valid in Islamic law. It, therefore, comes true on him that if he has a fancy for a Muslim woman, she would either be an adulterer or will become an adulterer after having illicit relations with him, or he would fancy a polytheist woman, with whom the marriage is as impermissible as adultery. This is the explanation of the first sentence of the verse, that is **الرَّائِي لَا يَنْكِحُ إِلَّا زَانِيَةً** (24:3). **أَوْ مُشْرِكَةً**.

Likewise, if a woman is a habitual adulterer and does not beg Allah's pardon, then a truly believing Muslim male, for whom marriage is a religious trust, would not really fancy such a woman, especially knowing

fully well that she would not give up her obnoxious habit of adultery even after the bond of marriage. Only a male adulterer would be attracted to her whose sole aim is to fulfill his lust rather than marriage. But if she makes marriage a condition for any mundane consideration, he accepts that too as a compromise. Alternatively, a polytheist male would agree to marry an adulterer (Muslim) woman. Since, marrying a polytheist is as prohibited for a Muslim woman as adultery, two things have been combined in this situation, that the man is both a polytheist and an adulterer. This is the explanation of the second sentence of the verse وَالرَّائِيَةُ (24:3) لَا يَنْكِحُهَا إِلَّا زَانٍ أَوْ مُشْرِكٌ.

This has become apparent from the above explanation that the term adulterer is used for those men and women who do not repent and beg Allah's Mercy, and stick to this evil habit. In case an adulterer man marries a chaste woman for the sake of house-keeping or for having children, then there is no ban to this marriage from this verse. Similarly, if an adulterer woman marries a virtuous man with the intent of leading a pure life, then also there is no stopping for such a marriage in the light of this verse. Such a marriage will be valid in accordance with the Islamic law. Majority of the Muslim jurists like Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Imām Mālik and Imām Shāfi'ī etc. are of the same view, and it is also established that the companions of the Prophet ﷺ have solemnized such marriages. Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr has also reported the same *fatwa* by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ. Now, as to the last sentence of the verse وَحُرِّمَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (24:3) some commentators have explained the word ذَلِكَ as alluding towards adultery. In that case the meaning of the sentence would be that, as the adultery is such an evil act, it has been forbidden for believers. There is no confusion in the meaning by adopting this explanation, but taking ذَلِكَ for the meaning of adultery is rather far fetched in the context of this verse. Therefore, other commentators have adopted the explanation for ذَلِكَ to allude towards the marriage of adulterer (man and woman) and polytheist (man and woman).

The marriage between a Muslim man and a polytheist woman, and between a polytheist man and a Muslim woman is even otherwise established as forbidden by other categorical Qur'ānic injunctions, and there is consensus of Ummah on the issue. However, the marriage between an adulterer man and a chaste woman, and a chaste man and

an adulterer woman is forbidden as implied by this sentence but is exclusive to the situation that a chaste man after marrying an adulterer woman does not stop her from indulging in adultery even after the marriage, as that will be nothing short of pimping, which is forbidden (حرام) by Islamic law. Similarly, if a pious and chaste lady marries a habitual adulterer man and let him indulge in adultery even after the marriage, then this is also forbidden (حرام). What is meant here is that it is a big sin, but it does not follow that their marriage will be nullified.

The word 'prohibited' (حرام) has two connotations in Islamic law. One, that this act is a sin and one who acts upon it will undergo punishment for that in the Hereafter, and the other is that it will have no legal validity in this world either. For instance if a Muslim man marries a polytheist or a woman of prohibited degree, then it is not only a sin but such a marriage is not valid under Islamic law. There is no difference between such a marriage and adultery. The second meaning of prohibition is that the act is forbidden (حرام) and is liable for punishment, but the legal consequences of the act are recognized. For example if a man elopes or abducts a woman and then marries her before two witnesses with her consent, then despite the act being unlawful, the marriage will be valid and the children legitimate. Similarly the marriage between an adulterer man and an adulterer woman is though prohibited if they marry for some worldly expediency but their real aim is adultery, yet, such a marriage is legally recognized. As such all the provisions of marriage, such as alimony, dower, lineage proof, heritage etc. will all be applicable. This way the word حَرَّمَ in this verse fits in very well for the polytheist woman as per former explanation, and for the adulterers (man and woman) according to the latter explanation.

In the light of this explanation it is not needed to declare the verse as cancelled as has been done by some commentators.

Verses 4 - 5

وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَاجْلِدُوهُمْ
تَمْنِينَ جَلْدَةً وَلَا تَقْبَلُوا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً أَبَدًا ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

﴿٤﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا ۚ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ
رَحِيمٌ ﴿٥﴾

And those who accuse the chaste women (of fornication), but they do not produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes and do not accept their any evidence any more, and they are the sinners, [4] except those who repent afterwards and mend their ways; then, Allah is All-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [5]

Commentary

The third injunction relating to fornication is on false accusation and the punishment prescribed for it

As explained earlier, since adultery is the most damaging and heinous of all crimes for society, as such its punishment is also most severe under Islamic law, compared to all other crimes. Hence it was the requirement of justice and fairness that the special care be attached to prove this act. Without having prescribed evidence under Islamic law, no one should dare accuse any man or woman of adultery. Therefore, the Islamic law has made it mandatory to produce four honest equitable just men as witnesses to the crime, without which the accusation of adultery is declared a big crime by itself, for which the prescribed punishment (حد) is eighty stripes. In view of this mandatory provision one would dare making the accusation of adultery only when he is absolutely sure of watching the crime happening himself. Not only that, at the same time he should be sure that alongwith him another three honest men have also seen the crime happening, for which they will give the evidence. Because, if there are no other witnesses, or the total number is less than four, or there is doubt if the witnesses will give the evidence, then only one man would never like to venture evidence alone and be punished with eighty stripes.

A doubt and its answer

As for the issue that when there are such strong conditions for the evidence of adultery, the criminals will have a free hand. No one will ever dare to give evidence and fulfill the conditions of Islamic law, and hence, no criminal will ever get punished. But this thinking is totally wrong, because these conditions are exclusive to the punishment prescribed as

ḥadd for adultery, i.e. - hundred stripes or stoning. If two non-*mehram* man and woman are seen together in a compromising posture or indulging in shameless acts, then there is no restriction against giving evidence for it. All such matters which have nexus to adultery are also liable for punishment under Islamic penal code, for which punishment of stripes is awarded at the discretion of the judge or the ruler in accordance with the extent of the crime, but not the maximum punishment of *ḥadd*. Therefore, someone who has seen the act of adultery, but has no other witnesses need not give evidence of adultery, but can testify for having seen the accused persons in compromising position, and the judge or ruler can award the punishment after establishing the crime.

Who are *muḥṣanāt* (مُحْصَنَات)

The word *Muḥṣanāt* is derived from the word *إِحْصَان*. In the Islamic jurisprudence there are two types of *إِحْصَان*. One, that has been acknowledged for the punishment of adultery. It means that the person against whom adultery is established is sane, adult, a free Muslim, and who is validly married to a Muslim woman and has also copulated with her. In that case the punishment of stoning will be awarded to him. The second type is that which has been acknowledged for the punishment of *فَدَف*, that is punishment for accusation of adultery. It means that the person against whom the charge of adultery is levelled is sane, adult, a free Muslim and chaste, that is he has not been proved an adulterer before. The word *مُحْصَنَات* is used in this sense in this verse (Jaṣṣāṣ).

Ruling

In the Qur'ānic verse, either because of general practice or because of the incident for which the verse was revealed, the accusation of adultery and related punishment is described in a way that the accusers are men and the accused is a chaste lady. But the injunction applies to all situations because of the common ground applicable to all persons. If a woman levels a charge of adultery against another woman or a man, or a man accuses another man, but the required legal evidence is lacking, then in either case the accuser will be liable to the punishment of eighty stripes. (Jaṣṣāṣ & Hidāyah)

Ruling

The punishment of eighty stripes as *ḥadd* is exclusive to false

accusation of adultery and does not apply to accusation of any other crime. However, other punishments of *ta'zīr* can be awarded on false accusations of other crimes. Although it is not specifically mentioned in the Qur'ān that this punishment is exclusive to false accusation of adultery but the condition of four witnesses is the proof of its exclusiveness, because the condition of four witnesses is only in the case of adultery. (Jaṣṣāṣ and Hidāyah)

Ruling

The punishment prescribed for *qazf* (false accusation of adultery) relates to the right of the person against whom the charge of adultery is levelled. As such the punishment against this crime will be executed only when the person demands the execution of the punishment, otherwise it will be annulled. This is unlike the punishment of adultery, which is purely a right of Allah. Therefore, it has to be executed, even though no person has ever demanded for it.

وَلَا تَقْبَلُوا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً أَبَدًا

And do not accept his any evidence any more - 24:4.

It means that the person guilty of *qazf* is subject to two punishments. One is inflict at once, i.e. the eighty stripes, but there is another punishment which stays with the culprit for ever. This punishment is that his evidence will not be accepted in any matter, unless he begs Allah's pardon with sincere repentance, and is also forgiven by the one whom he had accused. Until this is done, his evidence will not be acceptable in any case. This much is by consensus of Ummah. But in case of Hanafiah, even after begging the pardon, his evidence is not acceptable. Only his sin is pardoned.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Except those who repent afterwards and mend their ways; then, Allah is All-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. (24:5)

Those who have been punished for false accusation of adultery, if they beg pardon and improve their habits, so that there is no risk of repetition of falsehood from them and also obtain forgiveness from one they had accused, then Allah Ta'ālā grants forgiveness and is Merciful.

This exemption, that is *إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا* refers to only the last sentence of the

previous verse according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and some other Imāms, which is وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (24:4). So, with this exemption it means that the one who is punished for false accusation is a sinner, but if he repents with sincerity and improves himself after obtaining forgiveness from the one he had falsely accused, then he will no longer remain a sinner, and his punishment will be pardoned in the Hereafter. In other words the two punishments meant for this world, which are referred in the beginning of the verse, that is eighty stripes and inadmissibility of his evidence, will remain despite the repentance. It is because the big punishment of stripes has already been executed and the second punishment is part of *ḥadd*. All scholars are unanimous on the point that repentance does not remit punishment of *ḥadd*, only the torment of the Hereafter is pardoned. Since inadmissibility of the evidence is part of *ḥadd*, it will not be remitted by repentance. Imām Shafi'i and some other Imāms have taken this exemption toward all the sentences of the previous verse, which means that as one does not remain sinner after repentance, hence he would also not be debarred from giving evidence. Jaṣṣāṣ and Maḥzarī have provided arguments on both sides - Those interested may consult them.

Verses 6 - 10

وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ أَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ شُهَدَاءُ إِلَّا أَنْفُسُهُمْ فَشَهَادَةُ أَحَدِهِمْ أَرْبَعُ شَهَدَاتٍ بِاللَّهِ ۖ إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٦﴾ وَالْخَامِسَةُ أَنَّ لَعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٧﴾ وَيَدْرُؤُا عَنْهَا الْعَذَابَ أَنْ تَشْهَدَ أَرْبَعَ شَهَدَاتٍ ۖ بِاللَّهِ ۖ إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٨﴾ وَالْخَامِسَةَ أَنَّ غَضَبَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٩﴾ وَلَوْ لَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٠﴾

And those who accuse their wives (of adultery) and they have no witnesses except their own selves, then the evidence of one of them would be to swear four oaths by Allah that he is from among the truthful, [6] and the fifth (oath) that Allah's curse be on him if he is from among the liars. [7] And it will remove the punishment from the woman if she swears four oaths by Allah that

he (the accuser husband) is certainly from among the liars, [8] and the fifth (oath) that Allah's wrath be on her if he is among the truthful. [9] And had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you and His mercy and (had it not been) that Allah is Most-Relenting, All-Wise (you would have been ruined). [10]

Commentary

The fourth injunction is of Li'an (لِإِن : curse) among the adjuncts of fornication

The meaning of لِعَان and مُلَاعَنَة is to curse and praying for Allah's wrath on each other. Certain specific types of oaths between husband and wife with special connotation are called *Li'an* (لِإِن) in Islamic law. When a husband accuses his wife of adultery or refuses to own his child as being legitimate, and his wife refutes his allegation to be false, and claims for the punishment of false accusation (قَذْف) of eighty stripes to be awarded to him, then the husband will be asked to produce four witnesses. If the husband produces four witnesses, then the wife will be awarded the punishment of adultery, and if he could not produce four witnesses, then they will be subjected to *li'an* (لِإِن), that is first the husband will be asked to testify four times with the wordings given in the Qur'an to the effect that he is honest, and the fifth time will say that if he was lying, then Allah's curse be on him.

If the husband hesitates from saying these words, then he should be arrested, and asked either to swear by saying these words five times or accept himself to be a liar. Until he accedes to one of the two alternatives, he should not be released. If he accepts himself to be a liar, then he should be awarded the punishment of false allegation of adultery (حَدِّ الْقَذْف), but, in case he swears by repeating the required words five times, then the wife be asked to swear five times by uttering the words given in the Qur'an for this purpose. If she refuses to swear, then she should be put under arrest until such time that either she swears five times or accepts her guilt of adultery, in which case she will be awarded the punishment for adultery. In case she agrees to swear and utters the required words five times, then the process of *li'an* (لِإِن) has been completed. This way they both have escaped the punishment in this world, but in the Hereafter, the one who has lied will suffer the punishment, as Allah knows best who is the liar. However, in this world

also, after the process of *li'ān* (لِإِن) this couple will be forbidden to each other for ever. The husband should free the woman by divorcing her. If the husband does not divorce her, then the judge or the ruler can have them separated by his decree, which will have the same force as divorce. Moreover, they also cannot get married again for ever. Details of the process of *li'ān* (لِإِن) are given in the books of *fiqh*, where they can be seen.

The law of *li'ān* (لِإِن) has been placed in the Islamic jurisprudence to take care of the psychology and emotions of the husband, because in the preceding verses it has been ruled that for putting the blame of adultery on anyone it is essential to produce four eyewitnesses, and if one fails to do so, then he himself will be liable to punishment of false allegation of adultery. For a common man it is possible to keep quiet and not to accuse someone of adultery if he cannot produce four eye-witnesses, in order to save himself from the punishment of false accusation of adultery, but for the husband it is different and a very grave matter, when he has seen the adultery of his wife with his own eyes. For if he accuses his wife without the support of four eye-witnesses he will be liable to punishment of eighty stripes, and if he keeps quiet, it will be a life long agony for him to live with the knowledge that his wife has been unfaithful to him. Therefore, the husband's case has been separated from the general law and a separate provision has been prescribed, which is exclusive to the case between husband and wife. For others the directive is the same as enjoined in the preceding verses.

The books of Ḥadīth have narrated two incidents under this subject. The commentators have different views as to which of the two incidents was the cause of revelation of these verses. Qurṭubī has taken both the incidents as the cause of revelation of verses so as the revelation was repeated twice. Ḥafīz Ibn Ḥajr, the annotator of Bukhārī, and Nawawī, the annotator of Muslim, have treated both incidents as the cause of revelation of the verses. Their reasoning is more appealing, which will soon appear. One incident is that of Hilāl bin Umayyah and his wife, which is narrated in Bukhārī on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās ؓ. The initial part of this incident, also on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, has appeared in the Musnād of Aḥmad like this:

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has said that when the verses of Qur'ān on

punishment of false accusation of adultery were revealed namely,

وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَاجْلِدُوهُمْ ثَمَانِينَ جَلْدَةً

And those who accuse the chaste women (of fornication), but they do not produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes - 24:4.

in which it is made obligatory on the person accusing a woman of adultery to produce four eyewitnesses, one of them he being himself, and if he fails to do so, then he should be charged with the false accusation and awarded eighty stripes instead, and should also be debarred for life from giving any evidence. After hearing these verses a leader of Madīnah, Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah ؓ enquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ whether these verses were revealed like that only. The Holy Prophet ﷺ (was very surprised to hear this from Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah), asked the Anṣār whether they were listening to what their leader had said. The group of Anṣār pleaded to the Holy Prophet ﷺ not to reproach him, as he had made this enquiry only because of extreme sense of honour. Then Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah spoke himself and said "My parents be sacrificed on your honour! I know fully well that these verses are nothing but truth, and have been revealed from Allah Ta'ālā; but what I am surprised of is that if I see a shameless wife in a situation that a strange man is lying over her, then would it not be right for me to scold him and remove him from there. Instead, will it be incumbent on me to get four men and show them this situation to make them eye-witnesses, and by the time I could find four men, he runs away after performing his work?". (Sayyidnā Sa'd's wordings are recorded with slight differences by various narrators, but the gist of all is the same. - Qurṭubī)

Only a short time had lapsed after revelation of the verses of punishment against false accusation of adultery and the remarks made by Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah, that the incident of Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ؓ took place. It so happened that Sayyidnā Hilāl ؓ returned from his lands late in the night, when he saw a man with his wife with his own eyes, and listened to their conversation. But he did not do any thing and waited until the dawn, when he went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and narrated the story, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was very unhappy to hear about this incident and felt very bad. In the meantime the people of Anṣār were gathered and started discussing among themselves that the same thing had

happened as was hinted by their chief, and that Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ؓ would be punished with eighty stripes in accordance with the Islamic law, and be debarred for life for giving any evidence. Nevertheless, Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ؓ said 'By Allah I am very hopeful that Allah Ta'ālā will take me out of this predicament'. Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī has also quoted that in fact the Holy Prophet ﷺ, after hearing the incident of Sayyidnā Hilāl ؓ had asked him, according to Islamic law, to produce four eye-witnesses or be prepared for the punishment of eighty stripes on the back. Sayyidnā Hilāl Ibn Umayyah swore an oath by God before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and pleaded that he was honest, and that Allah will surely send down a command which will save his back from flogging. While this conversation was still on Jibra'īl ؑ descended with the verses containing the law of *li'ān*, that is:

وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ أَزْوَاجَهُمْ

And those who accuse their wives (of adultery). - 24:6.

Abū Ya'lā has quoted the same version on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ, which also says that when the verses of *li'ān* were revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ gave the good tiding to Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ؓ that Allah Ta'ālā has sent down the solution to his predicament. Hilāl replied that he was hoping the same from Allah Ta'ālā.

Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ called Sayyidnā Hilāl Ibn Umayyah's ؓ wife also, and when they were both together, he inquired from the wife about the incident. She said that her husband was making a false accusation against her. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said that Allah knows one of you is a liar, so would you not dread (Allah's torment) and come out with the truth and repent. Then Sayyidnā Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ؓ said 'My parents be sacrificed on you! I have said nothing but truth and whatever I have said is true'. After that the Holy Prophet ﷺ directed that the process of *li'ān* be conducted on both husband and wife according to the revealed verses of the Qur'ān. First Sayyidnā Hilāl ؓ was asked to testify four times with the wordings of Qur'ān, which are, 'Believing Allah to be present everywhere and seeing everything, I testify that I am honest in my allegation', Sayyidnā Hilāl ؓ testified four times with the Qur'ānic wordings. When it came to testify the fifth time, of which the Qur'ānic wordings are, 'Allah's curse be on me, if I were lying'. At that

time the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to Sayyidnā Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ؓ, as a warning, that he must be careful and fear Allah, as worldly punishment is lighter than the torment of the Hereafter. The torment of Allah is much more severe than the punishment of people, and that the fifth testimony is the final one, on which the ruling would depend. But Hilāl Ibn Umayyah insisted that he could say under oath that Allah Ta'ālā would not punish him for his testimony in the Hereafter (as he was sure that this was a true testimony). Then he uttered the wordings of the fifth testimony. After that the Holy Prophet ﷺ obtained four oaths, in the similar manner, from his wife. She too swore with Qur'ānic wordings that her husband was lying. When it came to testify the fifth time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked her to wait, and warned her that it was the fifth and final testimony, and as such she should be fearful of Allah, as His torment is much more severe than the punishment by the people, that is the Islamic punishment of adultery. On hearing this, she hesitated to swear and waited in that condition for a while. Then said ultimately 'By Allah I will not disgrace my people', and testified the fifth time, saying that if her husband was true then Allah's wrath be on her. This way when the process of *li'ān* was completed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ separated the husband and wife, that is broke down their marriage, and ruled that the child to be born of this conception will take the mother's name and will not be attributed to the father, but the child should not be disparaged. (Tafsīr Maḥzarī quoted from Musnad Aḥmad, authority Ibn 'Abbās).

The second incident

The second incident is also quoted in the Ṣaḥīḥs of Bukhārī and Muslim, and the details of the incident are narrated by Baghawī on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās ؓ. He has said that the Holy Prophet ﷺ, while standing on *minbar*, related the verses in which it is enjoined to punish the man making false accusation of adultery (حَدِّ الْقَذْفِ), that is وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ (وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ) (24:4). At that time Sayyidnā 'Āṣim Ibn 'Adiyy al-Anṣā ؓ was also present in the crowd. He got up and pleaded 'O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, my life be sacrificed on your honour ! If any one of us discovers his wife lying in bed with another man and narrates this situation, then he will be punished with eighty stripes, and would be debarred from giving evidence for life. Moreover, the Muslims would call him liar. In such a situation how can we get the eyewitnesses immediately? And if we do, and

go in search of eyewitnesses, he would run away after doing his work, by the time we could bring the witnesses. It was the same inquiry made by 'Āsim Ibn 'Adiyy ؓ, which was made by Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah ؓ in the first incident.

This inquiry was made on a Friday. After that it so happened that 'Āsim Ibn 'Adiyy's ؓ cousin, 'Uwaimir, who had married Khaula رضى الله عنها, another cousin of 'Adiyy's, saw his wife involved with yet another cousin, Sharīk Ibn Saḥmā'. 'Uwaimir ؓ related this incident to his cousin 'Āsim Ibn 'Adiyy ؓ, who recited **إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ** and went to see the Holy Prophet ﷺ the next day – again a Friday. 'Adiyy ؓ said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he had made an inquiry on the previous Friday in which he himself has got involved unfortunately, as the same incident has taken place in his family. Baghawī has narrated the incident in great detail as to how were the husband and wife were called and went through the process of *li'ān* (Maḥzarī)

This incident is narrated in the Ṣaḥīḥs on the authority of Sayyidnā Saḥal Ibn Sa'd Sa'di ؓ that 'Uwaimir al-'Ajlānī ؓ inquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that if someone finds his wife in bed with another man then should he kill that man, as a result of which he will be killed by people or what else should he do? the Holy Prophet ﷺ replied that Allah Ta'ālā has revealed an injunction for the case of your wife and yourself. Go and get your wife. Sayyidnā Saḥal Ibn Sa'd ؓ, the narrator of the Ḥadīth, narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ subjected them to the process of *li'ān* in the mosque (This process has been explained above). When the process of *li'ān* was completed after both husband and wife had sworn five times, 'Uwaimir said 'If I still keep her as my wife this will mean as if I had made a false accusation against her. Therefore, I am announcing three divorces to her'. (Maḥzarī on authority of Ṣaḥīḥs)

In both these incidents it is reported that the verses of *li'ān* were revealed for that particular incident. Ḥafīẓ Ibn Ḥajar and Shaikh ul Islam Nawawī رحمه الله تعالى have noted the likeness in the two by explaining that it looks the first incident was that of Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ؓ, and the verses of *li'ān* were revealed in that connection, and immediately after that 'Uwaimir ؓ was also confronted with a similar incident, which he presented before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, perhaps not

knowing Hilāl Ibn Umayyah's ﷺ incident, which had occurred earlier. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ told him the judgement in his case. This appears plausible because, in the case of Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ﷺ the wordings are فنزل جبرئيل (Then Jibra'īl descended with these verses) , while in the case of 'Uwaimir ﷺ the wordings are قد أنزل الله فيك (Allah has revealed about you), the meaning of which could be that Allah Ta'ālā has enjoined His command in a case similar to yours. والله اعلم (Maẓharī)

Ruling

When *li'ān* has taken place between husband and wife before the judge then that woman becomes forbidden for good for that man, just like foster relatives are forbidden for marriage among themselves forever. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said in a Ḥadīth المتلاعنان لا يجتمعان ابداً (The spouses who have gone through *li'ān* can never join each other). Unlawfulness establishes immediately after the *li'ān*. As for the woman's second marriage with another man, she is allowed after the expiry of her 'iddah period of three months, when she is divorced by her first husband or if he had just said that he had left her. This is the ruling given by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى. But if the husband does not carry out any of the two alternatives, then the ruler or the judge would order the separation, which would have the same effect as the divorce, and after that she would complete three periods of menses, and then she would be free to marry another man. (Maẓharī etc.)

Ruling

When the *li'ān* is completed, after that the child that would be born from that conception would not have the name of her husband, but would be called after the name of the mother. The Holy Prophet ﷺ gave this ruling in both the cases of Hilāl Ibn Umayyah and 'Uwaimir رضي الله عنهم . اجمعين .

Ruling

Although the torment of Hereafter would increase on the one who is liar, after the *li'ān*, but the punishment of the world be annulled. Similarly, it is not permissible to call the woman an adulterer nor is it permissible to call her child illegitimate. This was also ruled by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the case of Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ﷺ. وقضى بان لا ترمى ولا ولدها.

Verses 11 - 26

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَاءُوا بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ ۚ لَا تَحْسَبُوهُ شَرًّا لَّكُم ۚ بَلْ
 هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَا اكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ ۚ وَالَّذِي تَوَلَّى
 كِبْرَهُ مِنْهُمْ لَهُ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾ وَلَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ
 وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بِنَفْسِهِمْ خَيْرًا ۖ وَقَالُوا هَذَا إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٢﴾ وَلَوْلَا جَاءُوا
 عَلَيْهِ بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ ۖ فَإِذْ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِالشُّهَدَاءِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُمُ
 الْكَذِبُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ
 لَمَسَّكُمْ فِي مَا أَفَضْتُمْ فِيهِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٤﴾ إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ بِأَلْسِنَتِكُمْ
 وَتَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ مَا لَيْسَ لَكُم بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَتَحْسَبُونَهُ هَيِّنًا ۖ وَهُوَ
 عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾ وَلَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ قُلْتُمْ مَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَتَكَلَّمَ
 بِهَذَا ۖ سُبْحَنَكَ هَذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٦﴾ يَعِظُكُمُ اللَّهُ أَنْ تَعُودُوا
 لِمِثْلِهِ أَبَدًا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَيُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ
 عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ
 آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۖ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا
 تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ رَءُوفٌ
 رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٢٠﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوتَ الشَّيْطَانِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْ
 خُطُوتَ الشَّيْطَانِ فَإِنَّهُ يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۚ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ
 عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ مَا زَكَاىَ مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَبَدًا ۚ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُزَكِّي مَنْ
 يَشَاءُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢١﴾ وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُوا الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ
 وَالسَّعَةِ أَنْ يُؤْتُوا أُولَى الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ
 اللَّهِ ۚ وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا ۚ أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ

عَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْغَافِلَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ لَعُنُوا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ يُوفِّيهِمُ اللَّهُ دِينَهُمُ الْحَقَّ وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٢٥﴾ الْخَبِيثَاتُ لِلْخَبِيثِينَ وَالْخَبِيثُونَ لِلْخَبِيثَاتِ ۖ وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ لِلطَّيِّبِينَ وَالطَّيِّبُونَ لِلطَّيِّبَاتِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ مُبَرَّءُونَ مِمَّا يَقُولُونَ ۖ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ ۖ وَزُكْرٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

Those who have come up with the false imputation are a gang among you. Do not think it is bad for you; rather, it is good for you. Everyone of them is liable for what he earned of the sin. And the one who undertook the major part of it, for him there is a mighty punishment. [11]

Why - when you (O believers) heard of it - did the believing men and the believing women not think well on their own selves and (why did they not) say, 'This is a manifest lie'. [12] Why did they (the accusers) not bring four witnesses to prove this? So, as they did not bring the witnesses, they are the liars in the sight of Allah. [13] And had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you, and His mercy in this world and in the Hereafter, a great punishment would have reached you for what you got indulged in - [14] when you were welcoming it with your tongues and were saying with your mouths something of which you had no knowledge, and were taking it as a trivial matter, while in the sight of Allah it was grave. [15] And why, when you heard of it, did you not say, 'It is not for us to speak about this. Pure are You (O Allah). This is a terrible calumny.' [16] Allah admonishes you never to repeat something like this, if you are believers. [17] And Allah makes the signs clear to you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [18]

Surely, those who like that shamelessness spreads among the believers, for them there is painful

punishment in this world and the Hereafter. And Allah knows and you do not know. [19] And had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you, and His mercy and that Allah is Very-Kind, Very-Merciful (you would have been destroyed). [20]

O those who believe, do not follow the footsteps of Satan. And whoever follows the footsteps of Satan, (should know that) he orders (one to commit) shameless acts and evil deeds. And had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you, and His mercy, not a single person from you would have ever attained purity. But Allah purifies whomsoever He wills. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [21]

And the men of grace and wealth among you should not swear against giving (their charitable gifts) to the kinsmen and the poor and to those who have migrated in the way of Allah. And they should forgive and forego. Do you not like that Allah forgives you? And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [22]

Surely, those who level a false charge against the chaste, naïve and believing women are cursed in this world and the Hereafter, and for them there is a mighty punishment [23] on the Day their tongues, their hands and their legs will testify against them of what they used to do. [24] On that day Allah will give them their due recompense in full and they will know that Allah is the Truth Who makes all things manifest. [25]

Vile women are for vile men, and vile men are for vile women. And good women are for good men and good men are for good women. Those are free from what they (the accusers) say. For them there is forgiveness and a graceful provision. [26]

Interconnection of verses

As has been mentioned earlier, the major part of Sūrah An-Nūr is in connection with those injunctions which are related with protection and security of chastity and continence. Diametrically to that, any attempt to debase the chastity and honour would be in violation of the injunction, for which the punishment in the world and the torment in the Hereafter are enjoined. In this connection, first the maximum punishment of adultery

(حد زنا), then the punishment for false accusation (حد قذف) and after that the process of *li'ān* have already been described. False accusation of adultery against a chaste woman, without the support of four eyewitnesses, is held to be a great sin, and for such a person the punishment of eighty stripes is prescribed. This injunction is in regard to common chaste Muslim women. But the case of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها was quite different and grave, when the hypocrites fabricated a false slander against her in 6th Hijra, and some Muslims also indulged in mentioning it. Indeed it was a much serious and grave situation than for an ordinary chaste Muslim woman, hence Allah Ta'ālā revealed ten verses at that point exonerating her from the accusation and to project her purity and chastity. These verses announce the exoneration of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها on one hand and a warning of severe punishment to all those who were involved in the slander in any way. This incident of imputation is called the episode of *ifk* (false imputation) in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. The word *Ifk* means worst type of lie, imputation or slander. In order to understand the explanation of these verses it is necessary to know the background of the incident of *Ifk*. Therefore, it will be in order to give a brief account of this episode to begin with.

The incident of *Ifk* and the slander

This incident has been narrated with extra ordinary details in the Ṣaḥīḥs and other books of Ḥadīth. However its brief version is as follows: When the Holy Prophet ﷺ went for the battle (بنى المصطلق) of Banī Muṣṭaliq, also known as battle (مريسيع) of *Muraisī'*, in the 6th Hijra, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها amongst the mothers of believers, was also accompanying him. The common practice was that first she would sit in her litter and then it was placed on the back of the camel. It was because by that time the injunction in regard to *hijāb* had been revealed. After the battle was over and the caravan was returning to Madīnah it stopped for camping to spend the night. Towards the end of the night an announcement was made to the effect that the caravan would soon be departing, so that people should get ready after completing the necessities. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها felt the call of nature and went out to ease herself. There the string of her necklace was broken and it fell down. It took her some time to locate it, so she got a little late. By the time

she returned to the camp, the caravan had departed. As for her camel, her litter was mounted on it's back without realizing that she was not sitting in it. This happened because she was so young and frail at that time that her absence from the litter was not noticed; and also because the litter was covered. On her return to the camp when she did not find the caravan there, she did not panic nor ran helter-skelter to locate it. Instead, she acted very prudently and sat down at the camping place after wrapping herself. She did this knowing the Holy Prophet ﷺ very well that when he will not find her in her litter (مُودَج) he will send out men to locate her at the camping place, and if she were gone some other place to locate them, it will only complicate things for the searching party. So, it was best to wait for them there, at the camp. Since it was still dark and she was tired, she fell asleep.

On the other hand, it so happened that Sayyidnā Safwān Ibn Mu'aṭṭal ؓ, whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ had assigned the duty to stay behind the caravan and pick up things if forgotten by anyone in a hurry, reached the camp at dawn. He saw someone sleeping. So he went there and recognized Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, whom he had seen before the injunction of *ḥijāb* was revealed. Seeing her there like that, he was extremely dismayed and uttered اِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَاِنَّا اِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ. On hearing his voice she was awakened, and covered her face. Then Sayyidnā Safwān ؓ brought his camel near her and made it sit down. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها sat on the camel's back and rode on, while he was holding the string of the camel and walking in front. 'Abdullāh Ibn Ubbayy was a very wicked hypocrite and enemy of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He got hold of this news and the wretched man fabricated shameless imputation against her. Unfortunately, some naïve Muslims also narrated the gossip on hearsay; for instance Sayyidnā Ḥassān and Miṣṭah ؓ among the males and Sayyidah Ḥamnah رضى الله عنها from the females. (Tafsīr Ad-Durr-al-Manthūr has reported this version with reference to Ibn Marduwaih on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ --- اعانته اى عبد الله ابن ابي حسان ومسطح وحمنة)

When this slander of the hypocrite was publicized, the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself was also very hurt. As for Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, it was but obvious to get hurt extremely. Even ordinary Muslims were also extremely pained on the spread of this totally false and fabricated slander. This went on for about a month, but at last Allah Ta'ālā revealed

these verses to exonerate her and condemn those who were involved in its fabrication or spread, in any way. The commentary on these verses will follow soon.

In accordance with the Qur'ānic injunction, which has been detailed above under the heading of punishment for false accusation (حَدِّ الْقَذِّ), those who were involved in the spread of false slander were asked to produce the evidence in support of their accusation. Since that was a totally unfounded accusation, they could not produce any evidence whatsoever. As a consequence, the Holy Prophet ﷺ awarded the punishment of false accusation (حَدِّ الْقَذِّ) to them, and each one of them was flogged with eighty stripes. Bazzār and Ibn Marduwaih have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ awarded the punishment to three Muslims, namely, Miṣṭah, Ḥamnah and Ḥassān ؓ, while Ṭabarani has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had awarded double the punishment of false accusation to 'Abdullāh Ibn Ubayy, the hypocrite, who had fabricated this slander. After that the Muslims repented, but the hypocrites remained as they were. (Bayān ul Qur'ān)

Commentary

Unique proficiency of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah's رضى الله عنها , and the remaining part of the incident of Ifk

The enemies of the Holy Prophet ﷺ did their best to harm him, and did every thing they could possibly think to afflict him. Amongst all the afflictions which were perpetrated by the infidels, perhaps the most severe and emotionally torturous was to pass slander on the most exalted, proficient, learned, and respected mother of the believers amongst all his pure wives. With the contemptible false slander the respected name of Sayyidnā Safwān Ibn Mu'attal ؓ was also maligned by the hypocrite 'Abdulāh Ibn Ubayy. The hypocrites gave the slander different colours and then spread it. The most distressful thing in this episode was that some simple Muslims were carried away by the unfortunate slander and started narrating it as well. The unfounded slander would have been exposed by the truth in a few days time, but for compensating the emotional torture inflicted on Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah and on the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself by it and for exonerating her, Allah Ta'ālā did not rest just at hinting at the episode in a revelation, but revealed almost two *ruku's* for

her exoneration. Not only that, but all those who had fabricated this slander, and those who had participated in narrating it, were warned to face the torment in this world and in the Hereafter. Perhaps never such warnings were revealed on any occasion.

In fact this incident of *Ifk* has brought into the open and highlighted the excellence of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah’s superior wisdom and intelligence along with her chastity and sanctity. That is why in the very first of the above quoted verses Allah Ta‘ālā has asked not to consider this incident as bad for her, rather it was a blessing. What could be a greater blessing than this, that Allah Ta‘ālā has confirmed her purity in no less than ten verses, which will be recited until the Dooms Day. Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها had herself said that she was quite confident that Allah Ta‘ālā would exonerate her and clarify her position through a *Wahy* (message to the Holy Prophet ﷺ), but did not consider herself to be so fortunate that Qur’ānic verses would be revealed referring to her person, which will be recited for ever. At this point it will help the readers to know some details about the incident for understanding the verses. So, they are briefly narrated here:

On return from that journey Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها got involved in her household affairs, and was not the least aware of the rumor that was circulated by the hypocrites about her. Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī has narrated on the authority of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها herself that after the return from the journey she fell slightly sick, the main cause of which was that she did not notice the favour and grace from the Holy Prophet ﷺ towards her, which was his norm. Instead, she noticed during that period that when he would come home, he would only inquire about her health after the salutation and go back. Since she did not know at all anything about the rumor that was being circulated about her, hence she could not understand the cause of his attitude towards her, but took the grief to heart, which started telling on her health. One day she went out in the open to ease herself, as there used to be no latrines in the houses in those days. Because she was not keeping well she took along Miṣṭaḥ’s mother with her. When they were returning home after she had eased herself, the foot of Miṣṭaḥ’s mother got entangled in her sheet and she fell down. As she fell down she uttered the phrase تَعَسَ مِسْطَحٌ. This phrase is normally used by Arabs while cursing someone. Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها

عنها was taken aback on hearing this phrase from Miṣṭah's mother for her own son, and said to her that it was very bad that she was cursing her own son, who was such a gentleman and who had participated in the battle of Badr. On that Miṣṭah's mother asked her 'My dear girl, don't you know, this son of mine, what has he been saying around?' Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها inquired as to what had he been saying around. Then Miṣṭah's mother told her the whole story of *Ifk* fabricated by the people, and how her son was involved in it's spreading. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها goes on to say that on hearing this her sickness was doubled. When she returned home and the Holy Prophet ﷺ came and inquired about her health after salutation as usual, she asked his permission whether she could go to her parent's house. He consented to her going to their house. The idea was to take them in confidence and have consultation. So she consulted her mother, who consoled her and said that there were people who were jealous of women like her, and spread rumors like that. So, she need not worry about it. Things would get alright on their own. On that she retorted 'Allah is Pure / Subhan Allah! People have been talking about that. How can I be patient?' Then the whole night she cried, and did not sleep a wink. On the other hand the Holy Prophet ﷺ was extremely grieved on the spread of this false story, more so, because he did not receive any revelation on the incident during that period. Therefore, he called Sayyidnā 'Alī and Usāmah Ibn Zaid رضي الله عنهما, who were both members of his household, and consulted them as to what should he do under the circumstances. Sayyidnā Usāmah Ibn Zaid رضي الله عنهما said very emphatically that on the basis of his information he had no misgivings about Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها whatsoever. There is absolutely nothing, which could point toward any mistrust. Hence he need not pay any heed to such rumors. Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنهما advised him (in order to bring him out of his grief and anxiety) that Allah Ta'ālā had not put any restriction on him, hence if he had any unpleasant feelings about Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, because of the rumors, then there are many other women. Moreover he suggested another alternative to remove his unpleasant feelings, and advised him to make inquiries about her from Barīrah رضى الله عنها, who was the slave girl working for Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها. Hence, the Holy Prophet ﷺ made inquiries from Barīrah رضى الله عنها, who submitted that she did not see anything unbecoming in Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها except that sometimes, because of her young

age, she would leave the dough in the open and go to sleep, and the goat would eat up the dough. (After this the Ḥadīth narrates the address of the Holy Prophet ﷺ from the rostrum in great detail in which he had complained about those who had fabricated the accusation and those who had spread the slander. A brief account of what happened next is as follows).

Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها goes on to say “I cried the whole day and the second night also continuously. My parents had also come to me, as they feared that I would break down with grief. While my parents were sitting with me the Holy Prophet ﷺ came in and sat down alongside me. He had not sit with me before ever since this incident had started. Then he recited the *khutbah* of *shahādah* and said ‘O, ‘Ā’ishah, I have received this information about you. If you are free from blame, then Allah will definitely exonerate you (that is express exoneration through revelation), but if you have slipped, then beg for Allah’s pardon with repentance, because when the servant invokes His mercy after admitting his sin then Allah Ta‘ālā accepts his repentance’. After the Holy Prophet ﷺ had completed his discourse, my tears dried up completely. There was not a drop in my eyes. I requested my father, Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه, to give an answer to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but he excused himself saying what could he say. Then I asked my mother to give an answer, and she too excused herself saying as to what could she say. Then per force I had to speak. I was only a young girl, and by then had not learnt much even the *Qur’ān*. In such a perplexing condition of grief and distress that she was in, even extremely learned and intelligent persons would have found it very difficult to express themselves in a balanced manner, but what Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها said at that time is a piece of highly intellectual and scholarly discourse. Her wordings are reproduced verbatim below:

والله لقد عرفت لقد سمعتم هذا الحديث حتى استقرّ في انفسكم وصدقتم به،
ولئن قلت لكم: انى بريئة، والله يعلم انى بريئة، لا تصدقوني ولن اعترف لكم
بامر، والله يعلم انى منه بريئة، لتصدقوني، والله لا اجد لى ولكم مثالا الا كما قال
ابو يوسف: فصبر جميل والله المستعان على ما تصفون

“By God, I fully realize that you listened to this talk and kept on listening until it made inroads into your heart, and you have confirmed this (by your actions). Now if I say that I am free

from this blame, as Allah knows well that I am in reality, then you will not verify my statement. And if I make admission of the accusation, of which Allah knows I am free, then you will agree with my admission. Wallah, now I do not see any example on the issue between you and me, except the one which the father of Yūsuf عليه السلام (Ya'qub عليه السلام), said after hearing the wrong statement of his sons that 'So patience is best. And it is Allah whose help is sought against what you describe.'

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها related further that "After having said so I went away and lied down on my bed. I was confident that since I was free from the blame in reality, Allah Ta'ālā would surely exonerate me by sending down a revelation. But I did not have the slightest idea or expectation that in my case Qur'ānic verses will be revealed, which will be recited forever. It was because I considered my position to be much lower than that. All I had expected was that probably my exoneration will be revealed to him in his dream". Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها goes on to narrate that "the Holy Prophet ﷺ had not got up from that company yet, nor anyone from the household had got up, when he was overtaken by the condition which he used to experience at the time of revelation of the Qur'ān. In this condition he used to perspire profusely on the forehead. When this condition was over, then the Holy Prophet ﷺ got up smiling, and the very first thing that he said was ابشري يا عائشة اما الله فقد ابراك that is "O 'Ā'ishah, listen the good tiding . As for Allah Ta'ālā, He has exonerated you". Then my mother said to me "Get up and go to the Holy Prophet ﷺ". I replied, "I do not feel obliged to any one in this case, except Allah, nor would I get up. I am thankful to my Lord, and it is He who has exonerated me."

Few distinctions of Sayyidah Ṣiddīqah رضي الله عنها:

While explaining these verses Imām Baghawī رحمه الله تعالى has said that there were some distinctions of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها which no woman other than her could get, and Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها also used to relate them with a sense of pride (as honorable gift). First, that before the marriage with the Holy Prophet ﷺ Jibra'īl عليه السلام had brought to him her image wrapped in a silk cloth, and said to him 'she is your wife', (As reported by At-Tirmidhī – from 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها) while some other versions say that Jibra'īl had brought this image in his palm.

Second, that the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not marry any maiden girl

other than her.

Third, that the Holy Prophet ﷺ died in her lap.

Fourth, that he ﷺ was buried in her house.

Fifth, that he ﷺ had received revelation even at that time also when he used to be with Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها under the same quilt. None other wives was granted this distinction ever.

Sixth, that her رضى الله عنها exoneration was sent down from the Heaven.

Seventh, that she was the daughter of the caliph of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and was herself a Ṣiddīqua رضى الله عنها, and was among those whom Allah Ta'ālā had promised forgiveness and bountiful sustenance even during their lifetime. (Maẓharī)

After seeing Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah's رضى الله عنها scholarly research, understanding of jurisprudence and eloquent expression, Sayyidnā Musā Ibn Ṭalḥah رحمه الله commented that he had never come across a person more eloquent than her. (Tirmidhī)

Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī has related that when Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was falsely accused, Allah Ta'ālā exonerated him through the evidence of a baby by granting him speech, and when Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام was falsely accused, Allah Ta'ālā exonerated her through the evidence of her son, 'Īsā عليه السلام, but when false accusation was leveled against Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, then Allah Ta'ālā sent down ten verses of the Holy Qur'ān to declare her exoneration, which has further enhanced her respect and stature.

Now the specific sentences of these verses will be discussed and elaborated:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَاءُوا بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ

Those who have come up with the false imputation are a gang among you. 24:11.

Literal meaning of *Ifk* (إفك) is to turn over, reverse or to change. The worst type of lie which turns the truth to falsehood and the false as truth, and labels the pious and God fearing as sinner, and the sinner as pious

and God fearing, also falls under the connotation of *Ifk*. 'Uṣbah : عُصْبَةُ means a group of ten to forty persons, but is also used for less or more persons. The word مِنْكُمْ (among you) in the verse refers to Muslims. Although the actual fabricator of the slander was 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Ubayy, who was a hypocrite and not a Muslim, but since the hypocrites used to claim themselves as Muslims, he too has been included within the fold of (مِنْكُمْ). Among the Muslims two men and one woman got involved in the spread of slander, who were awarded the punishment of false accusation by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, after the revelation of these verses. But all Muslims felt penitence and their repentance was accepted by Allah Ta'ālā. Among them were Sayyidnā Ḥassān and Miṣṭah ﷺ, who had both participated in the battle of Badr, and for whom Allah Ta'ālā has declared forgiveness in the Qur'an. For this very reason Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها used to dislike if any one would speak ill of Sayyidnā Ḥassān ﷺ before her, although he was one of those two men who were punished for false accusation. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها used to say that Ḥassān ﷺ was the one who had defended the Holy Prophet ﷺ in his poetry against the infidels. Hence, no one should speak ill of him. Whenever he used to visit Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها, she would make him sit with dignity and respect. (Mazharī etc.)

لَا تَحْسِبُوهُ شَرًّا لَّكُمْ

Do not think it is bad for you - 24:11.

This sentence is addressed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها, Ṣafwān ﷺ and all the Muslims, who were hurt by the spread of this rumor. The purport of the sentence is that you should not feel bad about this incident, because after the exoneration declared in the Qur'an by Allah Ta'ālā her esteem has been raised further, and those who were involved in rumor-mongering were warned strongly in the Qur'an, which will be recited until the Dooms Day.

لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِنْهُمْ مَا اكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ

Everyone of them is liable for what he earned of the sin - 24:11.

It means that whoever had taken part in the spread of this slander, his sin has been recorded exactly in the same proportion as was his share in the spread of the slander, and he will be punished accordingly. The one who had fabricated this rumor, which will be dealt later, deserves the

most severe punishment, and the one who endorsed the rumor when it reached him, a little less than that, and the one who kept quiet after hearing it, still less than that.

وَالَّذِي تَوَلَّى كِبْرَهُ مِنْهُمْ لَهُ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

And the one who undertook the major part of it, for him there is a mighty punishment - 24:11.

The word كِبْر means big, large or great. Here it means that the one who has taken big part in the slander, that is who fabricated it and passed on to others, for him is the great punishment. The indication is toward 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Ubayy (Baghawī etc.).

لَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بِأَنفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا ۖ وَقَالُوا هَذَا إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ

Why - when you (O believers) heard of it – did the believing men and the believing women not think well on their own selves and (why did they not) say, 'This is a manifest lie'. - 24:12.

It means that when the Muslim men women heard about this slander they should have a good assumption about their own-self – that is about their Muslim brother and sister – and declared that it was but an open lie. In this verse quite a few things need attention. In the first place the Holy Qur'an has hinted by the word بِأَنفُسِهِمْ (on their own selves) that if a Muslim defames and disgraces another Muslim, he in fact disgraces himself, because the relationship of Islam has brought them all together as one body. A similar expression is used by the Holy Qur'an wherever the close tie between a Muslim and the whole Ummah is to be emphasized, for instance, a verse says لَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ (49:11) which means 'Do not cast aspersion on your own-self', which actually means do not cast aspersion on any of your Muslim brethren – man or woman. At another place the Qur'an says لَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ (4:29) which means 'Do not kill yourselves'. Here again the sense is the same, that is, do not kill any of your Muslim brethren. Yet at a third place it says وَلَا تَخْرُجُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ (2:84) which means 'You shall not drive out yourselves from your homes'. Here also it means not to expel any Muslim from his house. At a fourth place it says فَسَلِّمُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ, which means 'Salute your own-self', which in fact means, salute your Muslim brethren. All these verses point toward one theme, that a Muslim who casts aspersion on another Muslim or causes oppression and harm to another Muslim, he in fact casts aspersion

and causes harm to himself, because it leads to defamation of the whole Muslim Ummah, as the poet Saadi has said:

چواز قومے یکے بے دانشی کرد ☆ نہ کہ را منزلت ماند نہ مہ را

"When a single person from a nation does an unwise act, no one from that nation, big or small, can achieve a respectful place (in the eyes of others).

It was this teaching of the Qur'ān which brought up the Muslims into prominence, and when they gained prominence, it was the whole nation which was uplifted, both collectively and individually. One can see the result of giving up of the Qur'ānic teachings, that the Muslims have slumped into oblivion, again both collectively and individually.

The other point, which needs attention in this verse, is that after having said *لَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ* (Why, when you (O believers) heard of it) it was in the fitness of things that the address form should have been used by saying, "why did you not think well of your own selves". But the verse has opted for "the believers" instead of "you". The Holy Qur'ān at this point has changed its form and said *ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ* instead of *ظَنَنْتُمْ*. In this form there is a subtle allusion that those who had committed this act were not fit to be called Mu'mins (believers) to the extent of this act, because it was the demand of faith that a Muslim should have stuck to the favourable view for another Muslim.

The third point which needs attention is that in the last sentence of this verse *وَقَالُوا هَذَا إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ* (24:12) it has been instilled that it was the demand of faith that the Muslims on hearing this rumor should have immediately rejected it as a total lie. This proves that to think good about any other Muslim is an obligatory demand of faith, unless an act of sin or evil is proved against him under Islamic law. Likewise, it is also the demand of faith to call an attribute of a sin or evil against a Muslim a lie, if there is no proof under Islamic law against him.

Ruling

This has proved that to think good about all Muslims men and women is obligatory, unless proved otherwise by Islamic law. And if someone accuses a Muslim without the proof under Islamic law, then the rejection of that accusation and to declare it as a lie is also obligatory, because it is nothing but backbiting and defaming an innocent Muslim. (Maẓharī)

لَوْلَا جَاءُوا عَلَيْهِ بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَإِذْ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِالشُّهَدَاءِ فَأُولَئِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْكَذِبُونَ

Why did they (the accusers) not bring four witnesses to prove this? So, as they did not bring the witnesses, they are the liars in the sight of Allah - 24:13.

In the first sentence of this verse it is emphasized that the Muslims should have demanded to produce evidence from those who were spreading this rumor, instead of becoming instrumental in passing on the rumor to others. Since the accusation of adultery cannot be proved without the production of four eyewitnesses, it should have been demanded of them either to produce four eyewitnesses or keep quiet. In the second sentence of the verse it is declared that, as they could not produce four eyewitnesses, so they are the ones who are liars before Allah.

It is worth noting here that it is quite probable that a person sees such an event with his own eyes, but is unable to produce four witnesses. And if he relates the event, which, in fact, he has seen with his own eyes, then how can he be called a liar. More so, to call him liar before Allah is not at all understandable, because Allah knows the truth about every thing happening. So, how could he be declared a liar before Allah, when the incident has actually taken place. There are two answers to this. First, here **عِنْدَ اللَّهِ** (in the sight of Allah) stands for Allah's command and the rule of Allah, Therefore, it means that in accordance with the rule of Allah and His command this person would be declared a liar and awarded the punishment of false accusation, because the command of Allah is not to relate the incidence, despite the fact that you have seen it, if four witnesses are not available. If someone relates it without the support of four witnesses, then he will be declared liar by law and will be punished.

The second explanation is that, it is against the dignity of a Muslim to do something having no purpose and object, especially a thing which would put blame on a Muslim. Hence, a Muslim should testify the commission of a crime or sin against another Muslim only with the intent of controlling and eradicating the crime and sin, and not for the purpose of defaming or hurting someone. So, if a person relates such an incident without the support of four witnesses claiming that he is doing it with the intent of reforming the society and for removing the evil from it, knowing that without the production of four witnesses he would neither be able to

prove the crime according to requirements of the Islamic law nor would the accused be punished, and on the other hand he will himself be liable to punishment for relating a lie, in such a situation he is عِنْدَ اللَّهِ (in the sight of Allah) a liar in the proclamation of his intent, claiming that he was testifying the incident for reforming the society and removing the evil. It is for the simple reason that in the absence of witnesses it is not possible to harbor this intention under the Islamic code. (Maẓharī)

An important and necessary warning

In both the above verses it is emphasized that every Muslim should have good opinion about other Muslims, and it is made obligatory for them to contradict and deny any insinuation and accusations without proof against the Muslims. But one should not have any doubt as to why the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not have the belief that the rumor was false, and as such denied it at the outset, instead he suffered for a month and asked Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا to beg Allah’s pardon if there was a slip on her part. (Bukhārī)

The explanation for this is that the anxiety of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not inconsistent with the injunction for Muslims to have good opinion about other Muslims, because he neither denied this rumor nor did he act on its exigency, and also he did not like the spread of the rumor. All did he say in the gathering of companions was ما علمت على اهلى الاخير (Bukhārī) that is, ‘I do not know anything but good and virtuous about my wife,. All these things are proofs of acting in conformity with the injunction of the verses of having good opinion. However, the definite and absolute belief, which could also remove the natural anxiety, followed when the verses of exoneration were revealed.

The substance of explanation is that in such a situation, creation of doubts and anxiety is but natural, but to act with care and caution, as the Holy Prophet ﷺ did, was not against having good opinion about the Muslims, especially when no action was taken on its exigency. Those Muslims who were awarded the punishment for false accusation and were reprimanded in these two verses, had actually acted on the exigency of the rumor and were involved in its spread. Spreading falsehood was unlawful and punishable even before the revelation of these verses.

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِي مَا أَفَضْتُمْ فِيهِ

عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

And had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you, and His mercy in this world and in the Hereafter, a great punishment would have reached you for what you got indulged in - 24:14.

This verse was revealed for those believers who had by mistake got somehow involved in the slander, but then repented and begged Allah's pardon. Some of them were even punished, but all of them were told through this verse that the crime they had committed was a very grave one, and on that crime they could have been subjected to punishment even in this world, like the one sent down on earlier people. In addition, they would have also been punished severely in the Hereafter, but Allah's dealings with those believers were that of grace and mercy, both in this world and in the Hereafter. Hence, the chastisement was withdrawn from them. The manifestation of Allah's grace and mercy in the world is that, first, the Divine help was granted to adopt Islam and its faith, then the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was accorded, which is an impediment for the award of punishment, and then again the Divine help was granted to repent sincerely and beg Allah's forgiveness for the sin which was committed, and ultimately the repentance was accepted and the sin was pardoned. While in the Hereafter, the token of Allah's grace and mercy is that He has promised to forgive and overlook and grant pardon.

إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ بِأَلْسِنَتِكُمْ

When you were welcoming it with your tongues - 24:15.

The word تَلَقَّى means to make inquiries from each other (to be inquisitive) and repeat before others. Here it means to repeat hearsay without probe and proof. ⁽¹⁾

وَتَحْسَبُونَهُ هَيِّنًا وَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ

And were taking it as a trivial matter, while in the sight of Allah it was grave - 24:15.

It means that you regarded it a trifle matter that you heard it and passed it on to others. But in the sight of Allah it was a great sin that without probing and finding out any proof you passed on something to

(1). Lexically the word also means 'welcoming'. This meaning is adopted in the translation of the text, because it also covers the meaning of receiving and conveying the news without hesitation. (Editor)

others to cause harm to other Muslims and to make their life miserable.

وَلَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ قُلْتُمْ مَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَتَكَلَّمَ بِهَذَا ۖ سُبْحَنَكَ هَذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيمٌ

And why, when you heard of it, did you not say, 'It is not for us to speak about this. Pure are You (O Allah). This is a terrible calumny.' - 24:16.

In this verse the same advice is repeated which was imparted in an earlier verse, with further elaboration as to what should the Muslims do in such a situation when they hear a rumor. The advice is that they should say in categorical terms that they are not allowed even to mention such a thing for which there is no proof. It is a very grave accusation.

A doubt and its answer

If someone has a doubt that just as the truth of an event cannot be verified without a proof, and hence it is unlawful to mention it and spread it, likewise, the report of that event should not be believed to be a lie and a 'terrible calumny' without a proof of its being a lie. The answer to this doubt is that it is the integral spirit of Islam to consider every Muslim as free from sins, and this is based on reasoning. Anything contrary to this proven reality is a lie if put forward without a proof, and no further proof is required to prove this assertion a lie. This is enough to call it a slander if a believer Muslim is blamed for a crime without proof.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۖ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

Surely, those who like that shamelessness spreads among the believers, for them there is a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter - 24:19.

Those who had taken part in any way in the slander are again condemned in this verse, and are warned with the punishment in the world and in the Hereafter. An extra element in this verse is that those who propagate such rumors actually want the spread of obscenity and immorality among the Muslims.

The Qur'ānic system for the prevention of obscenity

The Holy Qur'ān has drawn out this unique system for the prevention of obscenity that, in the first place such a news should not spread, and if at all it is leaked out, it should be backed up with lawful proof, so that the

punishment of adultery is also executed publicly, immediately after the spread of the news. This way the publicity itself will serve as a preventive measure. If there were no condition of lawful proof, then it would have been lot easy to pass on and publicize such scandals, especially, when there is no punishment attached to it. Absence of any fear against spreading scandals leads to minimizing the repulsion against immorality and obscenity from the people's mind; rather it encourages to indulge in such crimes and to propagate them. This is an every day experience that this sort of scandals is published in the newspapers daily. Young men and women read them frequently. As a result, the intensity of such wicked acts is minimized gradually, and instead a slow inclination for indulging in them develops in their minds. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'ān has allowed publicity of such news only in such situations when it is supported with lawful evidence, so that people should see the severe punishment for the obscene crime along with the news of adultery when they learn about it. Where there is no proof and punishment, Qur'ān has proclaimed the publicity of such news as a tool for spreading obscenity among the Muslims. This vital point needs to be pondered by the Muslims. This verse actually emphasizes that to give publicity to scandals without proof will invite very severe punishment both in this world and in the Hereafter. The punishment in the Hereafter will naturally follow after the Dooms Day, and thus cannot be experienced here, but the punishment of the world can be seen. So, those who were punished for false accusation have in fact experienced the punishment of the world. If anyone has escaped the execution of the punishment for want of proof needed for the award of this punishment, even then he has earned the punishment (which will be executed in the Hereafter). For the implication of the verse even this is enough.

وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُوا الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَنْ يُؤْتُوا أُولَى الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ
فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَلْيَغْفُوا ۚ وَلْيَصْفَحُوا ۚ أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ
رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

And the men of grace and wealth among you should not swear against giving (their charitable gifts) to the kinsmen and the poor and to those who have migrated in the way of Allah. And they should forgive and forego. Do you not like that Allah forgives you? And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful - 24:22.

Teachings of high morals for the exalted companions

The word اتلاء means to swear. Sayyidnā Miṣṭah and Ḥassān رضي الله عنها got involved in the incident of slandering Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها from amongst the Muslims. They were awarded punishment for false accusation by the Holy Prophet ﷺ after the revelation of exoneration verses. Both Sayyidnā Miṣṭah and Ḥassān were illustrious companions and had taken part in the battle of Badr, but they slipped on this occasion and received Divine help for the sincere repentance. Then the way exoneration was revealed by Allah Ta'ālā for Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها, in the same manner it was also declared that the repentance of these believers was accepted and they were pardoned.

Sayyidnā Miṣṭah was a relative of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, and was a poor person. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه used to help him materially. When the involvement of Miṣṭah in the spread of the incident of Ifk was established, then Sayyidnā Abū Bakr's paternal love for the daughter surged up, and he was annoyed with Sayyidnā Miṣṭah as a natural corollary, because her feelings were deeply injured by him. He then swore an oath that he would never help Sayyidnā Miṣṭah materially. It is obvious that to help any specific poor person is not obligatory for a Muslim, and if someone stops the material help he used to give to a poor person, it is not a sin. But Allah Ta'ālā wanted to make the illustrious group of companions as a model for the society. So, whereas on the one hand those who had slipped were granted Divine help to repent sincerely and reform themselves, on the other hand those who had sworn not to help any more the poor people, because of the natural grief and displeasure, were imparted wisdom of supreme ethics in this verse, that they should break their oath and expiate for it. It is below their dignity to stop the material help. They should also forgive and overlook, the way Allah has forgiven them.

Since it was not a religious obligation on Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه to help Sayyidnā Miṣṭah, therefore the Qur'ān has adopted the line to say that those whom Allah Ta'ālā has bestowed the knowledge and excellence, and who are granted the means to spend in the way of Allah, they should be careful not to undertake such an oath. The words أُولُوا الْفَضْلِ وَالسَّعَةِ (the men of grace and wealth) are used to put across this meaning.

The last sentence of this verse is اَلَّا تُحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ يَّغْفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ (24:22) which says

'Do you not like that Allah forgives you?

On this Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه said immediately والله ان يغفر الله لي that is 'By God, I definitely want that Allah forgives me'. Immediately after that he restored the material help of Sayyidnā Miṣṭah رضي الله عنه, and said 'This help will never stop now'. (Bukhārī and Muslim)

These are the graces of ethics which were imparted to train the illustrious companions. Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī has quoted on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said :

ليس الواصل بالمكافئ ولكن الواصل الذي اذا قطعت رحمه وصلها

'He is not the kind hearted towards relatives who only returns their favours, but the real kind hearted towards relatives is the one who maintains his relationship with them, despite they have severed the relations' (Maḥzarī).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْغُفْلَتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ لُعِنُوا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

Surely, those who level a false charge against the chaste, naïve and believing women are cursed in this world and the Hereafter, and for them there is a mighty punishment - 24:23.

On the face of it the same subject has been repeated in this verse which has already appeared in the verses of

وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَاجْلِدُوهُمْ ثَمَانِينَ جَلْدَةً وَلَا تَقْبَلُوا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً أَبَدًا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ. إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

And those who accuse the chaste women (of fornication), but they do not produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes and do not accept their any evidence any more, and they are the sinners, [4] except those who repent afterwards and mend their ways; then, Allah is All-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. (24:4,5)

But in fact there is a big difference between the two, because at the end of verses on punishment of false accusation (24:4,5), those who repent are exempted and promised forgiveness. There is no such thing in this verse, and instead it announces the curse in this world and in the Hereafter, without any exception.

Therefore, it is obvious that this verse (24:23) is aimed at those who were involved in slandering Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها, and did not repent, so much so that even after the revelation of her exoneration in the Qur’ān they adhered to their malicious accusation and kept on propagating it. It is but obvious that no Muslim could do such a thing. If a Muslim disregards a categorical Qur’ānic injunction, he cannot remain a Muslim. Hence, this reference relates to those hypocrites who did not stop their slander-mongering campaign against Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها even after the exoneration was revealed in her favour. There is no doubt that they were hypocrites and disbelievers. Therefore, those who had felt remorse on their doing they were granted pardon in the two worlds by Allah’s mercy, and those who did not repent are declared in this verse as cursed, both in this world and the Hereafter. Those who felt remorse were given the glad tiding of deliverance from punishment, and those who did not feel remorse were warned of severe punishment. Those who repented were given the good news in إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (Allah is Most forgiving Very-Merciful) and those who did not repent were warned of punishment in the next verse by saying يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ (On the Day their tongues, their hands and their legs will testify against them). (Bayān al-Qur’ān).

An important Warning

The few Muslims who got involved in the episode in connection with the slander on Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها did so at a time when verses regarding her exoneration were not revealed. After the revelation of verses of exoneration whoever makes an insinuation on her character is indeed a disbeliever and a denier of the Qur’ān, like the few groups of Shi’ities and some other individuals, who are involved in the shameful practice. There is not the slightest doubt that they are disbelievers. They are regarded disbelievers by the consensus of entire Ummah.

يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

On the Day their tongues, their hands and their legs will testify against them of what they used to do. - 24:24.

The Day on which their own tongues, hands and feet will speak against them and will testify against their crimes, they will be punished precisely according to the crimes they had committed. It is related in Aḥādīth that on the Dooms Day those who will admit their sins will be

pardoned by Allah Ta'ālā, and He will conceal their sins from the crowd of people. If anyone will deny his sins and will claim that he did not commit them, and say that the angels did not write his record of actions correctly, then his speech will be taken away from him and his hands and feet will be asked to testify, who will speak and testify. Another verse **الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَىٰ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ** (Today We set a seal on their mouths, - 36:65) states this very point. This verse says that their mouths will be sealed, but the verse under discussion (of Sūrah An-Nūr) says that their tongues will testify. There is no contradiction in the two verses in that they will not be able to use their tongues at their discretion. In other words they will have no control on tongues to say anything wrong, as they have in this world. Instead their tongues will say only the right things against their intent and wish. It is also possible that at a certain time their mouths and tongues will be completely sealed and then the tongues are commanded to speak the truth (Only Allah knows best)

الْخَبِيثَاتُ لِلْخَبِيثِينَ وَالْخَبِيثُونَ لِلْخَبِيثَاتِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ لِلطَّيِّبِينَ وَالطَّيِّبُونَ لِلطَّيِّبَاتِ
أُولَٰئِكَ مُبَرَّءُونَ مِمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ

Vile women are for vile men, and vile men are for vile women. And good women are for good men and good men are for good women. Those are free from what they (the accusers) say. For them there is forgiveness and a graceful provision - 24:26.

It means that the vulgar women are suitable for vulgar men and the vulgar men are suitable for vulgar women. And pure women are worthy for pure men and pure men are worthy for pure women.

In this last verse the common principle is stated that Allah Ta'ālā has created a connection between the people of the same nature. Thus, vulgar and unchaste women are inclined towards vulgar and unchaste men and vice versa. Similarly, pure and chaste women show inclination towards pure and decent men and vice versa. Therefore, every one tries to find the spouse according to one's inclination and liking, and in a natural way one does find one to suit him or her.

In the light of this norm and principle it is now quite clear that the messengers of Allah, who are the models of purity and chastity both outwardly and inwardly in this world, are granted spouses by Allah Ta'ālā in accordance with their status. Hence, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, who is

the head of all messengers, was bestowed with spouses who were befitting to his position and status in purity, chastity and ethical excellence, and Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها is more prominent among them all. Only those can have any doubt or suspicion about her who do not have faith in the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. It is mentioned about the wife of Sayyidnā Nūḥ and Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليهما السلام in the Qur'ān that they were disbelievers, but it is also established that they were not involved in any obscenity or vulgarity. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said ما بغت امرأة نبي قط Never did a wife of a messenger commit adultery'. (ذكر في الدر المنثور). It is, therefore, corroborated that it is possible that a messenger's wife could be a disbeliever, but it is not possible that she could be vulgar and sexually immoral, because adultery is a natural detestable act in the eyes of people, whereas disbelief is not a natural detestable thing. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 27- 29

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ حَتَّى تَسْتَأْذِنُوا
وَتُسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَهْلِهَا ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ فَإِنْ
لَمْ تَجِدُوا فِيهَا أَحَدًا فَلَا تَدْخُلُوهَا حَتَّى يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ قِيلَ
لَكُمْ ارْجِعُوا فَارْجِعُوا هُوَ أَزْكَى لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ
﴿٢٨﴾ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ مَسْكُونَةٍ فِيهَا مَتَاعٌ
لَّكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

O those who believe, do not enter any houses, other than your own houses unless you seek permission and greet their inmates with Salām. That is good for you, so that you may observe advice. [27] Then, if you do not find anyone there, do not enter therein until permission is given to you. And if it is said to you, 'Go back', just go back; it is more decent for you. And Allah is All-Knowing of what you do. [28] There is no sin on you if you enter uninhabited houses in which you have rightful benefit. And Allah knows what you reveal and what you conceal. [29]

Commentary

The fifth injunction regarding mutual meetings and asking permission before entering anyone's home

Right from the beginning of Sūrah An-Nūr it is enjoined to curb the obscenity and immorality in the society, and to restrain this, various punishments are prescribed. Then labeling of false accusation on someone is condemned. After that such injunctions are enjoined which can check these obscenities and safeguard the chastity and continence, and also create an atmosphere to eliminate the conditions of their development. The issues and instructions regarding seeking permission before entering anyone's house (*Isti'dhān*) also fall within these injunctions. Hence, entering in anyone's house or to peep in without the permission of the owner has been prohibited. The wisdom in this instruction is that one should not cast an eye on women who are not one's *maḥram* (with whom marriage is prohibited). In the above verses various instructions are given against various types of houses.

There are four categories of houses. One, in which one lives, where there is no possibility of the presence of some stranger. Two, where someone else is also residing, irrespective of being *maḥram* or not, and where there is a possibility of someone's entry. Three, where there are both possibilities that someone is living or the house is empty. Four, a house which is not specified for anyone's living, such as, a mosque, school, monastery, shrine etc., where all people go in. Out of these four categories it is obvious that there is no need of asking permission to go in the houses of the first kind. Hence, the first category is not mentioned specifically in these verses, but for the other three categories injunctions are spelled out.

An important aspect of Qur'ānic social ethic is that if you go to meet someone, first ask the permission and do not enter in anyone's house without permission.

It is a pity that the amount of importance Islam has attached to ethics of visiting someone by providing detailed instructions about them in the Qur'ān, and which were strongly emphasized by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, both by practice and oral teachings, the present day Muslims neglect them by the same margin. Even the pious and educated people do not regard this a sin, nor do they make an effort to act on them. The other civilized nations of the world have adopted them to improve their society,

but the Muslims have lagged behind them all. This was the very first Islamic injunction which was overlooked by the Muslims to begin with. It is worth noting that seeking permission (*Isti'dhān*) is that injunction of the Holy Qur'ān in which even the slightest laxity or alteration is termed by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه as the rejection of the Qur'ān itself. As a matter of fact now people overlook these injunctions so much as if they are not part of the Holy Qur'ān. اَنَا لِلّٰهِ وَاَنَا اِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Wisdom of seeking permission (*Isti'dhān*)

Allah Ta'ālā has provided every person a place where he lives, whether he owns it or has acquired it on rent. Such a place is his home, and the real purpose of a home is to provide comfort and tranquility. When the Holy Qur'ān has referred to one's home as a great blessing of Allah, it has an indication towards this basic objective of a home. The Qur'ān says, جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ سَكَنًا (16:80) It means that Allah has given you peace and comfort through your homes. One can enjoy peace and comfort in his home only when he can live there without the interference of any one else, and can rest and work at will. Any interference in his freedom is tantamount to killing the very purpose of the home, which is naturally very damaging. Islam has prohibited harming anyone without any cause. A great wisdom in the injunction of seeking permission is to save people from interference of others and its consequent ill effects, which is obligatory on all peace loving people.

The other consideration in the injunction is for the visitor himself, in that if he would go in to meet someone after taking permission, then the host will also reciprocate his gesture by giving him due importance and respect. If his visit is with purpose then the host will be sympathetic and try to meet his need. On the other hand, if he would go in to call on someone without taking his permission, like an uncouth, then naturally he would not be so welcome, and the host would like to get rid of him as quickly as possible. Even if the host had any sympathy toward him, it would be reduced, and the sin for causing trouble to a Muslim would be additional.

The third consideration is the elimination of obscenity and immorality. If one enters someone's home without taking prior permission, the possibility is that he might see the ladies of the house, which may lead to temptations. It is for this reason that the injunctions on seeking

permission are placed next to punishment of adultery and punishment of false accusation etc.

The fourth consideration is that sometimes one is busy in the solitude of his home doing something which he does not want others to see. If someone comes into his house unannounced, then that act will be known to others, which he wanted to conceal. Any attempt to disclose the secrets of others is also a sin and a source of vexation. Some issues concerning seeking permission have been described in the above verses themselves, so they should be considered first. Other related issues will be dealt with later.

Ruling

In these verses the address is with the phrase **يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا** (O those who believe) which is used for men, (because the relative pronoun in the text **الَّذِينَ** is originally of masculine gender) but women are also included in the injunction, like other Qur'ānic injunctions, which are normally addressed to men but women are included in them, except in some cases where it is expressly mentioned that they are exclusive for men. Therefore, wives of the Ṣaḥābah included themselves in the address of the present verse and acted accordingly. Whenever they would visit any one's house, they used to seek permission. Sayyidah Umm Iyās رضى الله عنها has said 'We were four women who used to visit frequently Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها together, and used to seek permission before going in the house, and would enter only after she had permitted'. (Ibn Kathīr on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim)

Ruling

It is clear from the universality of this verse that on a visit to anyone's house the injunction of seeking permission is common to all, whether men or women, Maḥram or non-Maḥram. Either a woman goes to visit another woman, or a man goes to visit another man, it is obligatory on all to seek permission. Similarly, if a man visits his mother, sisters or any other Maḥram woman, he should seek permission. Imām Mālik has narrated in Muwaṭṭa' quoting 'Aṭā' Ibn Yasār رحمهم الله تعالى that someone enquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ whether he should seek permission before going to his mother. He ﷺ said 'Yes, do seek permission'. Then that fellow said 'O Messenger of Allah, ﷺ I live with my mother in the same house'. He ﷺ said even then you should not enter the house without taking

permission. He asked again "O Messenger of Allah, ﷺ ! 'I am always at her service'. He ﷺ replied, 'You should still ask her permission. Would you like that you see your mother naked? He said 'No, no'. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ said 'It is for this reason that you should seek permission, because there is a possibility that she might have uncovered some of her coverable parts in the house for some need'. (Maḏharī)

One learns from this Ḥadīth that the word "other than your own houses" in the phrase غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ, (24:27) as it appears in the Qur'an, refers to those houses where one lives alone and no one else, like parents, brothers or sisters reside with him. (It is only in this case that seeking permission is not necessary).

Ruling

If someone is living alone in the house with his wife, even then it is preferable and a *sunnah* to make some sort of sound, such as hem or thump, before entering, in order to make known his incoming, although seeking permission is not obligatory in this case. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd's wife رضى الله عنه has reported that whenever 'Abdullāh would come in the house, he would always make a hemming sound at the door to announce his arrival before entering, so that he should not see us in a condition that he would like to avoid. (Ibn Kathīr quoting Ibn Jarīr with an authentic chain). In another situation Ibn Juraij inquired from 'Aṭā' رحمه الله تعالى whether it is obligatory to seek permission before going in one's own house to his wife, and he said 'no'. Ibn Kathīr after quoting this version has explained that what it means is that it is not obligatory but preferable.

The Traditional way of seeking permission

The procedure for seeking permission, as explained in the verse is حَتَّى تَسْتَأْذِنُوا وَتُسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَهْلِهَا, (24:27) that is do not enter into any one's house until carrying out two things. First, *Isti'nās* – its literal meaning is to seek acquaintance. Majority of commentators have taken this word for *isti'dhān*, that is to take permission. By the use of word *Isti'nās* instead of *isti'dhān* there is a hint that in taking permission before entering, the host gets acquainted with the visitor through his voice and the element of surprise is removed. The second requirement is greeting the inmates of the house with *salām*. Some commentators have elaborated it as; one should first seek permission and on entering the house should greet the

inmates. Qurṭubī has also adopted this explanation that one should first seek permission, and when it is granted, only then go in and greet the hosts. Sayyidnā Abū Ayyub Anṣārī's Ḥadīth also corresponds well with this explanation, to which Māwardī has added further that if the visitor happens to see an inmate of the house before seeking permission, then he should first greet him, and then seek permission to go in, otherwise one should first seek permission and then greet on entering. But the procedure that seems to be *masnun* through narrations of Ḥadīth, is that one should first greet from outside with *Assalamu 'Alaikum* (السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ) and then by announcing his name should seek permission to go in.

Imām Bukhārī in his *al-Adab ul-Mufrad* has quoted on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Huraira ؓ that if someone seeks permission before greeting, the host need not reply (because he has deviated from the practice adopted by the Holy Prophet ﷺ) (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) Abū Dāwūd has narrated in his Ḥadīth that someone from Banī 'Āmir sought permission from the Holy Prophet ﷺ, saying أَلِجْ (that is, can I thrust in?). On hearing that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to his servant, "this man does not know how to seek permission. Go to him and explain to him that the permission should be sought by saying السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَدْخُلْ (that is, Assalāmu 'Alaikum, can I come in?). Before the servant could go out that fellow himself said 'Assalāmu 'Alaikum' السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَدْخُلْ as he had heard the instruction of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then he ﷺ permitted him to come in. (Ibn Kathīr)

Baihaqi has narrated in *Shu'ab-ul-Īmān* on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said لَا تَدْخُلُوا مَنْ لَمْ يَدْعَا بِالسَّلَامِ that is 'Do not let in the one who does not greet before seeking permission'. (Maḥzarī). In this case the Holy Prophet ﷺ has made two corrections. One, that one should greet first. Two, that he had used the word أَدْخُلْ instead of أَلِجْ, which was not proper, because the word is derived from *wulūj* (وُلُوج) which means, to make an entry with force into a narrow space. This expression is against all ethics. In any case, one learns from these narrations that the instruction of greetings given in the Qur'ānic verses relate to the greeting for seeking permission, which is offered from outside the house for inviting the attention of the inmates. On entering the house, the greetings should be repeated in the usual manner.

Ruling

The procedure of greeting first and then seeking permission for entry, as has been established by various Aḥādīth, can best be followed if the visitor himself announces his name for seeking permission. This was exactly the practice of Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه. He used to announce at the door of the Holy Prophet ﷺ **السّلام على رسول الله، السّلام عليكم أيّدخل عمر؟** that is, after the greetings whether Umar can come in. (Ibn Kathīr etc.) Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim has narrated that Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī رضي الله عنه went to see Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه and sought permission to get in by saying **السّلام عليكم هذا الاشعري** هذا ابو موسى، السّلام عليكم هذا الاشعري (Qurṭubī). First he gave his name as Abū Mūsā and then for further clarification added Ash‘arī. This is to help the host recognize the caller immediately and respond quickly, for without recognizing the visitor the host may hesitate to give permission for getting in.

Ruling

Some people adopt the worst possible practice in this regard that they ask permission from outside to come in without disclosing their identity. And when the host inquires as to who was there, they would answer ‘It is me’. This is not the right answer to the host. If he has not recognized the voice on the first call, how can he recognize with the answer – ‘it is me’.

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī has reported in his Jāmi‘ quoting ‘Alī Ibn ‘Aṣīm al-Wāsiṭī that when he went to Baṣrah he went to see Sayyidnā Mughira Ibn Shu‘bah رضي الله عنه, and knocked at his door. Sayyidnā Mughīrah رضي الله عنه inquired from inside as to who was there. He answered *Ana* (أنا) that is ‘It is me’. So, Sayyidnā Mughīrah رضي الله عنه said ‘I do not have anyone among my friends by the name *Ana*’ (أنا). Then he went out and related the Ḥadīth to him that one day Sayyidnā Jābir Ibn ‘Abdullāh رضي الله عنه went to see the Holy Prophet ﷺ and knocked at his door. The Holy Prophet ﷺ inquired from inside as to who was there, and Jābir رضي الله عنه said *Ana* (أنا) that is ‘It is me’. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ repeated the words ‘*Ana Ana*’ (أنا، أنا) to explain that there is no point in saying *Ana, Ana*, as no one can be recognized by this word.

Ruling

There is yet another very wrong practice which is commonly observed these days even by the educated people, and that is they would knock at the door and when the inmates would enquire from inside as to who was

there, they do not reply at all and remain silent. This is the worst practice to tease the host, as he remains in suspense about the identity of the visitor, and the very spirit of seeking permission is defeated.

Ruling

This has also been established by these narrations that it is also a correct procedure of seeking permission to knock at the door, provided one tells his name at the same time.

Ruling

If one knocks at the door, it should not be so strong that the inmates get upset, rather it should be mild with the sole purpose of letting the inmates know that some one is at the door. Those who used to knock at the door of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they used to knock with their nails in a manner that the sound should not be loud enough to disturb him. (As narrated by Al-Khaṭīb in his Jāmi' – Qurṭubī) If one understands the spirit behind *isti'dhān* that it is meant to seek permission with familiarization (*isti'nās*) of the caller, then automatically he would take care of all those things which could possibly trouble the host. What is required is to knock gently and announce the name for familiarization.

Important Warning

These days people do not pay any attention toward seeking permission, which is a clear sin for forsaking an obligation. But on the other hand there are some problems in our time for those who do want to take permission in the prescribed manner, that is first offer greetings from outside and then seek permission by announcing their name. One problem is that the host to whom they want their voice to reach is not available close to the door, hence it is difficult to convey to him the sound of greetings and the name of the caller. Therefore, the important thing to note is that the spirit of the injunction is not to enter anyone's house without permission. There may be different forms of seeking permission in different places in different times. One such form is to knock at the door, which is established by the record of Ḥadīth. In the present time people fix up bells at their doors. It is sufficient for carrying out the obligation of seeking permission to press the button of the bell, provided the caller also announces his name after that in an audible voice for the host. Apart from this, it is also in order to adopt any other method of seeking permission in vogue at any place. The present day system of sending in

visiting cards to disclose the identity of the caller is a good practice in that not only the name of the caller but also his address is made known to the host without any effort on his part, which fulfils the spirit behind *isti'dhān*. Therefore, there is no harm in adopting this system.

Ruling

If a person asks permission from someone and he replies in the negative that he cannot meet at that time, then the caller should go back and not feel offended. He should realize that every one's needs and circumstances are different, and at times it is beyond the control of persons to call in the visitor or to go out and meet him. Hence, his refusal to meet should be accepted with good grace. In the present verse the same thing is emphasized *لَكُمْ اَرْجِعُوا فَارْجِعُوا هُوَ اَزْكٰى لَكُمْ* that is, 'If it is said to you, "Go back" just go back, it is more decent for you - 24:28. Some people of the past ages are reported to have said 'I waited all my life wishing that I visit someone and seek permission to go in the house, and the host turns down my request asking me to go back so that I could be rewarded the grace of this Qur'ānic injunction by following it. But, alas, I could never get that blessing'.

Ruling

The Islamic jurisprudence has established a two-sided system of teaching the mannerism of social graces and of saving all from the troubles and inconvenience. The way visitors are advised in this verse that if their request for permission to go in is turned down, they should not feel offended, similarly, the other side of the coin is taught in a Ḥadīth. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said *اِنَّ لِرَّوْرِكِ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا* (Surely your visitors have some rights to be observed by you). It means that one who comes to meet you he too has his right on you. His right is that you should call him in, pay him respect and listen to him. Do not refuse to meet him without any serious excuse or a genuine reason.'

Ruling

If one goes to meet someone and seeks permission to go in, but does not get an answer, then according to practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he should knock a second time, and still if there is no answer then he should knock a third time. If he does not get an answer the third time, then the injunction is, that he should go back. After knocking three times it becomes obvious that the inmate must have heard the knock, but

presumably he is in a condition that he cannot answer, for instance, praying or in the toilet or taking shower. Alternatively, he does not want to meet at that time. In both the situations it is not advisable to keep on staying there or keep on knocking, as it will upset the host, which must be avoided. The real purpose of *isti'dhān* is to avoid any inconvenience to the host.

Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā Ash'arī ؓ has narrated that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that *اذا استأذن احدكم ثلاثاً فلم يؤذن له فليرجع* that is, 'when someone seeks permission three times and does not get reply, he should go back' (Ibn Kathīr quoting Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī). And Masnad Aḥmad has reported on authority of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ had gone to meet Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah ؓ, and said *Assalāmu 'Alaikum* (السلام عليكم) from outside to seek permission (*Isti'dhān*) to go in, according to his practice. Sayyidnā Sa'd ؓ did reply the greeting but in a soft tone, so that the Holy Prophet ﷺ does not hear. He ؓ repeated the greeting a second time and then a third time. On each occasion Sayyidnā Sa'd ؓ listened the greeting and replied in a soft tone. After that the Holy Prophet ﷺ went back. When Sayyidnā Sa'd ؓ realized that, he ran after him and explained that he heard his voice every time and also replied but in a soft tone, so that the greeting words are spoken for him repeatedly by the blessed tongue, as they will bring good fortune to him. (the Holy Prophet ﷺ explained to him the way of *sunnah* that when there is no response from inside, the visitor should go back) After that Sayyidnā Sa'd ؓ took the Holy Prophet ﷺ along with him to his house where he treated him with some refreshments, which the Holy Prophet ﷺ accepted graciously.

This action of Sayyidnā Sa'd ؓ was the result of overwhelming love and affection for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and at that moment he did not realize that the most exalted Messenger was waiting at his door and he should immediately go out and receive him with due respect. Instead, his mind was induced toward the thought that it would be of benefit to him if the blessed tongue would utter *Assalāmu 'Alaikum* repeatedly. In any case this incident has established the issue that if there is no answer after seeking permission thrice, then according to practice of the Prophet ﷺ, the visitor should go back. It is against the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to keep on waiting there, which will be a cause of trouble for the inmate and tantamount to forcing the host to come out.

Ruling

The foregoing ruling relates to the situation when one has sought permission thrice by knocking and greetings. In that situation to keep on waiting there would cause trouble to the host. But if someone waits at the door of a scholar or a pious person without seeking permission or without informing him, in the hope that he would meet him when he would come out according to his convenience, such a waiting is not undesirable, rather it is a great respect shown by the caller. The Qur'an itself has advised people that to call the Holy Prophet ﷺ while he is inside, with the purpose of calling him out of the house is disrespect to him. People should wait for him outside until he comes out on his own according to his convenience. The related verse says **وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوا حَتَّى تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ** (And if they had patience until you come out to them, that would be better for them - 49:5). Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has said, 'Sometimes I keep on waiting the whole afternoon at the door of an Anṣārī companion until he would come out on his own, for asking about some *Aḥadīth*. Had I sought permission to go in, he would have definitely allowed me, but I regarded that against ethics. That is why I used to bear the trouble of waiting'. (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī).

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ مَسْكُونَةٍ فِيهَا مَتَاعٌ لَكُمْ

There is no sin on you if you enter uninhabited houses in which you have rightful benefit - 24:29.

Literal meaning of the word **مَتَاع** *Mata'* is to use, put to use, and to benefit from something. Anything from which some benefit is drawn is also called *Mata'*. In this verse *Mata'* is used in its literal meaning and is translated as 'rightful benefit'. It is reported by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ that when verses regarding *isti'dhān* (seeking permission) were revealed, he inquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ "Ya Rasūl Allah! What would the traders of Quraish do after this prohibition? They travel with trading caravans from Makkah and Madīnah to Syria and have a number of resting places spread out all along the route, where they stay while traveling. There are no permanent inmates in those places. So, what will be the form of *isti'dhān* at those places? Whom will they seek the permission from?" On this enquiry the above verse was revealed (Maḥzarī on authority of Ibn Abi Ḥātim).

The background of revelation of this verse tells us that the phrase **يُوتَا** **غَيْرَ مَسْكُونَةٍ** (uninhabited houses) relates to those houses and places which are not specifically meant for the residence of any individual or community. Rather they are open to all to go in and stay or use, such as public inns, which are made for the purpose of free stay of the travelers, mosques, shrines, schools, hospitals, post offices, railway stations, airports and community centers. Thus, all places built for the common welfare of people fall under this category, where every one is allowed to go in and use.

Ruling

In all the welfare centers where there are some restrictions or conditions placed by the owners or by the organizers for entry, their observance is obligatory by religious law also. For instance, if it is necessary for entering a railway platform to purchase the ticket, it will not be permissible in Shari'ah to enter it without the ticket. The ticket is compulsory. Similarly, going into the restricted area of an airport is not allowed without having the necessary permission.

Ruling

However, if the specific rooms are reserved in mosques, shrines, schools, hospitals etc. for their staff, such as closets in mosques, shrines and schools or the offices in the hospitals, railway stations and airports, they do not fall under the category of 'uninhabited houses'. In all such places entry without permission is prohibited by Shariah.

Some other issues related to Isti'dhan

When we have learnt that the basic purpose of the Shari'ah injunction of Isti'dhān is to avoid giving any trouble to others, and teaching of ethics of social graces, on the same principle the following code of conducts can also be drawn.

Some Issues relating to Telephone

To ring up anyone at a time which is normally his resting time or the time for prayers, unless extremely urgent, is not justified, for the same reason that it will be troublesome for him, just like entering anyone's house without permission, which disturbs the freedom of the host.

Ruling

If one has to talk to someone frequently, then it is desirable that it should be enquired from him the convenient time when he can talk without any trouble, and then only at that time he should be contacted on telephone.

Ruling

If one has to discuss something in detail with someone on telephone, then it is advisable that he should first find out from him whether he can talk in detail for some length of time. It is a common happening that when one is busy, the telephone bell rings, and he is compelled to lift the receiver no matter what he was doing, and if the caller talks for long, it really hurts the listener.

Ruling

Some people do not care about the ringing of telephone. It keeps on ringing but they would not lift the receiver. This habit is also against the Islamic ethics, and tantamount to usurpation of the right of the caller. As the Ḥadīth says *أَنَّ لِرُؤُوكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا* (Your guests have some rights obligated on you). It indicates that the one who has come to meet you, it is his right that you talk to him, and do not refuse meeting him without reason, similarly, the one who wants to talk to you on telephone, it is his right that you respond.

Ruling

If you have gone to someone's house to meet him, and are waiting for the permission, in that situation you must not peep in, because the purpose of *Isti'dhān* is that you should not know what the host wants to hide from you. If you see it by peeping inside, then that purpose is lost. It is strongly prohibited in the *ḥadīth* (Bukhārī and Muslim quoting Saḥal Ibn Sa'd as-Sa'īdī). It was the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that if he would go to meet someone and wait for the permission to go in, he would stand by the side of the door and not in front of it. He used to make *Isti'dhān* by the side of the door, because very seldom there were curtains on the door during that time, and if they were, there was the possibility of their opening up with the wind. (Mazharī)

Ruling

The prohibition to go in the houses mentioned in the above verse is meant under normal conditions. But if there is an emergency, like fire or

demolition of the house, then one can enter without taking permission, rather it is desirable to go in immediately.

Ruling

If a person has sent someone to call another person, and he comes along with the person who had gone to fetch him, then he need not take permission to go in. The messenger who had gone to fetch him is permission by itself. But if he does not turn up along with the messenger, but goes later, then seeking of permission will be required. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said 'اذا دعى أحدكم فجاء مع الرسول فان ذلك له اذن' 'If someone is called and he comes along with the messenger, then this by itself is permission for going in'. (Abū Dāwūd – Maḥzarī)

Verses 30 - 31

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ۖ ذَٰلِكَ
 أَرَكِيَ لَهُمْ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌۢ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ
 يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا
 مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ ۖ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ
 زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ
 أَوْ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنَاتِ أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ
 أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوِ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولَى الْأَرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ
 أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَىٰ عَوْرَتِ النِّسَاءِ ۖ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ
 بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ ۖ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ ۖ وَتَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ
 الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

Say to the believing men that they must lower their gazes and guard their private parts; it is more decent for them. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what they do. [30] And say to the believing women that they must lower their gazes and guard their private parts, and must not expose their adornment, except that which

appears thereof, and must wrap their bosoms with their shawls, and must not expose their adornment except to their husbands or their fathers or the fathers of their husbands, or to their sons or the sons of their husbands, or to their brothers or the sons of their brothers or the sons of their sisters, or to their women, or to those owned by their right hands, or male attendants having no (sexual) urge, or to the children who are not yet conscious of the shames of women. And let them not stamp their feet in a way that the adornment they conceal is known. And repent to Allah O believers, all of you, so that you may achieve success.

[31]

Commentary

An important chapter for the prevention of obscenity and security of chastity: *Ḥijāb* for women

The very first verses on the subject of *ḥijāb* for women are the ones which were revealed in Sūrah Aḥzāb at the time of marriage of the mother of the believers Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥash رضى الله عنها with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Some have given the date of revelation of these verses as 3rd Hijra while others say it was 5th Hijra. Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and Nail Al-Auṭār have given preference to the latter date, while Rūḥ ul-M'āni has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه that this marriage was solemnized in Dhulqa'dah 5th Hijra. But it is an agreed position that the first verse on *Ḥijāb* was revealed on this occasion. As for the above referred verses of Sūrah an-Nūr, they were revealed at the time of incident of *Ifk*, which had happened on return from the battle of Banī Mustaliq or Muraisī'. This battle had taken place in the 6th Hijra. Hence, it is clear from the revelation point of view that Sūrah An-Nūr's verses on *ḥijāb* were revealed later, and Sūrah Aḥzāb's four verses were revealed earlier, and that the practice on the injunction of *ḥijāb* had started when the verses of Sūrah Aḥzāb were revealed. The subject of *ḥijāb* will be discussed Inshallah in detail under Sūrah Aḥzāb. Here the explanation will be restricted to only those verses which appear in Sūrah an-Nūr.

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ أَزْكَىٰ لَهُمْ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ

Say to the believing men that they must lower their gazes and

guard their private parts; it is more decent for them. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what they do. (24:30)

The word *يَغُضُّ* (*yaghuḍḍu*) is derived from *غَضَّ* (*ghaḍḍ*), which means to bring down or to lower, (Rāghib) lowering of eyes or to keep eyes down as enjoined in the verse, means to turn the eyes from something which is prohibited to be seen by Shari'ah (Ibn Kathīr). Ibn Ḥibbān has given the explanation that to look at a non-Maḥram woman with intent to have (sexual) pleasure is totally prohibited, and to look without any such motive is *makrūh* (undesirable). To look at any woman's or man's private parts of the body is included in this explanation (except in case of dire necessity, such as medical examination). Peeping into anyone's house with the intent of finding out his secrets, and all such acts where looking is prohibited by Shari'ah are all included in the injunction.

وَيَحْفَظُوا أَرْوَاجَهُمْ (24:30) Protection of private parts is purported to express that all possible situations of satisfying unlawful sexual desires be guarded against. In this, adultery, sodomy, lesbian act, masturbation and all such acts that fulfill unlawful lust and passions are prohibited. The purpose of the verse is to prohibit all illicit acts for fulfilling unlawful passions. For this purpose the initial and the ultimate acts have been mentioned rather clearly, and all those actions which fall in between them are also included in the prohibition. For unlawful sexual passion the very first act is casting eye with bad motive and its ultimate result is adultery. Both these acts have been mentioned clearly and are prohibited. All other acts falling in between, such as touching hands or having conversation, are included by implication.

Ibn Kathīr has related Sayyidnā 'Ubaidah رضي الله عنه having said *كُلُّ مَا عَصَى اللَّهَ* that is 'Any act done in disobedience to Allah is a major sin, but the initial and ultimate acts are mentioned at the two ends of the verse'. The initial act is to cast eye, and the ultimate is adultery. Ṭabarānī has quoted Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said :

النظر سهم من سهام ابليس مسموم من تركها مخافتى ابدلته ايماننا يجد حلاوته
في قلبه. (از ابن كثير)

'Casting eye is a poisonous arrow among the arrows of Satan. Whoever turns away his eye fearing from Me (despite demand of the heart), I will give him such strong faith, the delight of

which he will feel in his heart'. (Ibn Kathīr)

It is reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā Jarīr Ibn 'Abdullāh al-Bajali ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has advised what should one do if by chance one's eye is cast on a non-Maḥram woman. He has quoted the Holy Prophet ﷺ as saying 'Turn away your eyes from there'. (Ibn Kathīr). Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ has said that first sight is forgivable, but casting eye a second time is sin. Both versions are alike, that is, if one casts his eye by chance without intention, it is forgiven being not intentional, otherwise it is prohibited to cast the eye intentionally, even the first time.

To stare intentionally at boys having no beard also falls within this ruling

Ibn Kathīr has reported that many elders of the Ummah used to forbid forcefully staring at young boys (having no beard), and many scholars have declared it as forbidden (Perhaps it is in a situation when one looks with bad intention and passionate desire. God knows best)

Looking at non-Maḥram is forbidden

وَقُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ

And say to the believing women that they must lower their gazes - 24:31.

In the initial part of this long verse the injunction is the same which has been enjoined on men-folk in the preceding verse, that is, keep the eyes down or turn away the eyes. Women-folk are also included in the injunction along with men, but in the next verse there is a separate injunction for them for laying more emphasis. Hence, it is clear that for women it is forbidden to look at any man except their *maḥrams*. Many scholars have declared that it is absolutely forbidden for women to see non-Maḥram men, irrespective of looking with bad intent and passion or without any intent and passion; in either case it is forbidden. For this ruling the argument put forward in support is the *ḥadīth* of Sayyidah 'Umm Salamah رضى الله عنها, which relates that once 'Umm Salamah and Maimūnah رضى الله عنهما both were with the Holy Prophet ﷺ when suddenly 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umm Maktūm, the companion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who was blind, came in, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked them to go inside. This incident had happened after the injunction of *ḥijāb* for

women was revealed. On this 'Umm Salamah رضى الله عنها - pleaded 'O Holy Prophet! But he is only blind, he can't see us'. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ replied 'Is it that you are blind too?' (Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī – Tirmidhī declared this *ḥadīth* as *hasan Ṣaḥīḥ*). Other jurists have ruled that there is no harm if women look at strange males without any passion. They base their argument on the *ḥadīth* of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, in which it is related that on an Eid day some African youths were showing their military exercises in the courtyard of the Mosque of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Holy Prophet ﷺ was watching this game, and so was Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, under the cover of the back of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. She kept on watching the game until she herself got tired of it, but the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not object to her watching. Scholars are all unanimous on the point that looking with lust is prohibited, but looking without lust is also not a preferred act.

To look at a woman's *satr* (concealable) parts by another woman without any lawful reason is also prohibited in line with the wordings of this verse. It is for the reason that concealing of *satr* (concealable) from all, both by men and women, is obligatory by Shariah. Man's *satr* (concealable) comprises all parts of the body from navel to knees, and that of women, the whole body, except face and palms. Neither can a man see another man's *satr* nor can a woman see another woman's *satr*. Looking by a man at a woman's *satr* or of a woman at a man's *satr* is highly prohibited, and amounts to contradiction of the injunction of the Qur'ānic verse which enjoins for 'turning away the eyes'. As has been explained above in detail, it is enjoined in the verse to lower the eyes or to turn the eyes away from everything which is prohibited to be seen under Islamic injunctions. To look at a woman's *satr* by another woman is included in that.

وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ

And must not expose their adornment, except that which appears thereof, and must wrap their bosoms with their shawls, and must not expose their adornment except to their husbands - 24:31.

The literal meaning of *zīnah* (زينة) is that with which a woman adorns herself to appear attractive. It may be nice clothes or ornaments. There is

an agreement of the scholars on the point that when the clothes and ornaments are not worn by women, and are only displayed in the market place, then they are allowed to be seen by men-folk. For this reason majority of scholars have taken the meaning of *zīnah* as those parts of the body where the objects of *zīnah* are worn. Hence, the meaning of the verse is that it is obligatory for women not to show the parts of the body where the objects of adornments are worn. (Rūḥ ul-Ma‘ānī). Whereas it is prohibited for women in this verse to show their *zīnah*, two exceptions have, however, been made. One is for that to be seen, and the other for those who see.

Exception from the injunction of *ḥijāb*

First exception is that of *مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا* (except that which appears thereof). It means that ‘Women are not permitted to show their *zīnah* to men, except that which is revealed on its own’. The indication is that while women are working, some parts of the body get uncovered automatically, and their covering is difficult, hence, exception of such parts is permitted. There is no sin in their uncovering. (Ibn Kathīr). Which parts do really fall under this exception? On this subject Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn Mas‘ūd ؓ and ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ have given different explanations. Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn Mas‘ūd ؓ has explained that what has been excepted in *مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا* is the outer covering, such as veil or the sheet used for *ḥijāb*. These over-clothings are used to cover up the normal garments of *zīnah*. Hence, the meaning of the verse would be that it is not permitted to show anything from the *zīnah* (garments), except the over-clothings like veil, whose hiding is not possible when going out for some work. On the other hand Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ has interpreted that it is purported for face and palms, because when a woman is forced to go out because of necessity, it is difficult to hide face and palms while engaged in her work. Therefore, according to the explanation of Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn Mas‘ūd ؓ it is not permitted for women even to uncover – their faces and palms before non-Maḥram men. Only the over-clothings, like veil etc. are excepted under necessity. But in accordance with the explanation of Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ it is permitted to uncover the face and palms before the non-Maḥrams. Thus, there is a difference of opinion among the religious scholars on the issue whether it is permissible to uncover the face and palms before non-Maḥrams or not. But all agree on

that if there is a risk of *fitnah* (i.e. stimulation of illicit desires) by looking at feminine face and palms, then its uncovering is not allowed, and women are not permitted to uncover their faces and palms in that situation. All scholars also agree on that in prayers women can uncover their faces and palms and in the uncovered position their prayers will be considered valid.

Qāḍī Baiḍāwī and Khāzīn have said in the explanation of this verse that the object of the verse appears to be that women should not let anything of their *zīnah* be seen, except that which gets uncovered during the process of working. In this definition the veil and sheet, as well as face and palms are all included, because when a woman goes out for some necessary work, veil and sheet are open to be seen in any case, but sometimes face and palms also get uncovered during the movements of work. Hence, their uncovering is allowed and is not regarded a sin. But it does not mean that men are allowed to see faces and palms of women unnecessarily. Instead, it is enjoined upon men to keep their eyes lower, and if a woman is constrained to uncover her face or palms, the men should turn their eyes away, unless required to see in the performance of some lawful act. In this explanation both the traditions and interpretations are reconciled. Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى has also ruled that it is not allowed to see the face and palms of a non-Maḥram woman without a lawful need. Ibn Ḥajar Makki Shafi'ī has quoted in his *zawājir* that Imām Shafi'ī's view is also the same that although women's face and palms are not part of their *satr*, and they are allowed to pray while these parts are uncovered, yet non-Maḥrams are not allowed to see them without a lawful need. However, this has already been stated above that even those scholars who have ruled it permissible to see women's face and palms, also agree that if there is a risk of mischief, then looking at their faces is not permissible. It is well known that the center of beauty and attraction is the face of a person, and the present age is full of temptation, mischief and lasciviousness, and people are lost in remissness. Therefore, in the present circumstances it is impermissible to uncover the face before the non-Maḥram men, except for medical treatment or in emergency. Similarly, it is not allowed for the men-folk as well to look at women intentionally, unless it is required by a genuine need.

After granting exception to the opened Zinah, it is enjoined in the

verse under reference وَلَيُضِرَّنَّ بِخُمْرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ (24:31) that is, 'must wrap their bosoms with their shawls'. (خُمْر) Khomor is the plural of (خِمَار) Khimār. It is the piece of cloth which women use to cover their head, and it also covers up the neck and bosom. جُيُوبَ (juyūb) is the plural of جَيْبَ, (jayb) which means upper part of the shirt just below the neck. Since the time immemorial this part of the garment is placed over the chest of a person, hence the covering of juyūb means covering of the chest or bosom. In the beginning of the verse showing of zīnah was prohibited, while in this sentence hiding of zīnah is emphasized and a specific situation is also described, the purpose of which is to eliminate an old custom of pre-Islamic days. In the pre-Islamic time women used to place the sheet on their head and let its two sides hang on their back, with the result that their neck, ears and bosom were left uncovered. Therefore, Muslim women were enjoined not to follow this, and instead were advised to place the two sides of the sheet one over the other, so that all these parts are covered. (Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Ibn Jubair – Rūh)

The second exception in the verse relates to the men before whom no *hijab* is to be observed by women. There are two reasons for this exception. First, those men who are exempt from this injunction are the *maḥrams*, hence, no risk of any trouble is expected from them. Allah Ta'ālā has put in their hearts deep respect and honour of their close female relatives, hence, there is no possibility of any mischief from them. Secondly, since the close relatives normally live all together, for the sake of convenience it is required that they do not hide from each other. But this should also be kept in mind that this exception from hiding from *maḥrams* is exclusive to *ḥijāb*, and not from the *satr* of women, where the exception is allowed only to husbands. Those parts of the body of women which are included in *satr*, and which are not allowed to be uncovered in the prayers, are not permitted to be seen by any *maḥram*.

Eight types of *maḥram* men and four other types with whom no *ḥijāb* is necessary are listed in this verse. In another verse of Sūrah Aḥzāb, which was revealed before this verse, only seven types of *maḥram* are mentioned. Hence, five more types were added in the above referred verse of Sūrah an-Nūr, which is a later revelation.

Warning

It should be noted that the word *maḥram* is used here in its general

sense, which includes husband also. In the connotation used by the scholars for this word it means the person with whom marriage is not allowed. That meaning of the word is not intended here. Let us now take up the details of the twelve exceptions mentioned in the verse under consideration: The first exception is that of husband with whom hiding of any part of the wife's body is not required. But, looking at the private parts of wife without need is not a preferable act. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها has said مَا رَأَى مِنِّي وَلَا رَأَى مِنْهُ 'Neither he saw my private parts nor did I see his'.

Second, exception is of fathers, in which category apart from father, grandfather, great grandfather are all included. Third, is the father-in-law, and husband's grandfather and great grandfather. Fourth, are the sons. Fifth, are the husband's sons, who may be from his other wives. Sixth, are the brothers, in which category all step-brothers whether from real-mother or from real-father are included. But cousin brothers are not part of this category. They are all non-Maḥrams. Seventh, are the sons of brothers. Here also sons of step-brothers are included, but sons of cousins are not included. Eighth, are the sons of sisters, and here again sons of step-sisters are included but not those of the cousins. These are the eight categories of *maḥrams*.

Ninth category

أَوْنِسَائِهِمْ (31) (or to their women). These words are used for Muslim women, before whom all such parts can be uncovered which are allowed to be uncovered before father or sons. It has already been clarified earlier that this exception relates to *ḥijāb* alone and not the *satr*. It is for the simple reason that, what is not allowed to be uncovered before *maḥram* men is also not permitted to be uncovered before any Muslim woman, except for medical treatment or under dire need.

By the exception made only for Muslim women it becomes obvious that it is necessary for Muslim women to cover themselves before non-Muslim women as well. Non-Muslim women are thus in the same category as that of non-Maḥram men. Ibn Kathīr has quoted the explanation given by Mujāhid رحمه الله تعالى for this verse that it is not permissible for a Muslim woman to uncover herself before non-Muslim women. But there are Ṣaḥīḥ *aḥadīth* available which prove that non-Muslim women used to visit wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, hence,

there is a difference of opinion among the jurists on the subject. Some have declared non-Muslim women like men for the application of this injunction, while others have placed both Muslim and non-Muslim women under one category - that is covering before them is not necessary. Imām Rāzi رحمه الله تعالى has opined that the word نِسَائِهِنَّ (their women) encompasses both Muslim and non-Muslim women, and the practice of virtuous elders of making Muslim women covered before non-Muslim women was because it was desirable (but not obligatory). Mufti of Baghdad, 'Allāmah 'Ālūsī رحمه الله تعالى has adopted this explanation in the Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī, and has remarked هذا القول اوفق بالناس اليوم فإنه لا يكاد يمكن احتجاب المسلمين عن الذميات (روح المعاني) This explanation is more suited to present time because it has become almost impossible for Muslim women to cover themselves before non-Muslim women. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

Tenth category

أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ (24:31). (or to those owned by their right hands). The general sense of the wording includes both male and female slaves and servants, but many a scholars and jurists consider that it applies only to female slaves, and not to the male slaves. Therefore, it is obligatory to be in cover before them, like other non-Maḥrams. Sa'īd Ibn al-Mussayab رحمه الله تعالى has said expressing his final view 'Do not be under the misconception that the wordings أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ are general, and include male slaves as well. It is not so. This verse refers to only female slaves, male slaves are not included in it'. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Ibn Sīrīn رحمه الله تعالى have said that it is not permissible for a male slave to see his female owner's hair (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī). Now the question is that if by the wordings أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ only female slaves were meant, then they were already included in the word نِسَائِهِنَّ (or to their women). What was the point in describing them separately? Jaṣṣāṣ رحمه الله تعالى has answered this question by explaining that the word نِسَائِهِنَّ in its apparent sense is meant for Muslim women only, and in case there are non-Muslims also among the female slaves, they need to be separated from the rest, hence the use of this word.

Eleventh category

أَوِ التَّبَعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولَى الْأَرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ (or male attendants having no {sexual} urge). Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has explained that, here those confused and deranged type of persons are meant who have no liking and inclination

toward women (Ibn Kathīr). The same explanation has been put forward by Ibn Jarīr quoting Abu ‘Abdullāh, Ibn Jubair, Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah رَحِمَهُمُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى etc. Therefore, those men are referred to here who do not have any lust or inclination towards women, nor are they interested in the beauty and charm of women, which they could describe before others. As against this, eunuchs do take interest in women’s special attributes; hence women should keep covered before them. There is a *ḥadīth* of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا on the subject, that an eunuch used to visit the wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and they regarded him to be included in the category of غَيْرِ أَوْلَى الْأَرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ (31) hence they allowed him to come in their homes. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw him and listened his conversation, he stopped him from coming inside the homes. (Rūḥ ul-Ma‘ānī).

For this very reason Ibn Ḥajar Makkī رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى has commented in Sharah al-Minhāj that no matter a man be impotent or devoid of genital organs or be very old, he is not included in the expression غَيْرِ أَوْلَى الْأَرْبَةِ, and women are required to cover themselves before all of them. However, addition of the word التَّابِعِينَ with the expression غَيْرِ أَوْلَى الْأَرْبَةِ is meant to indicate those who are confused and deranged, and enter the houses with the purpose of eating and drinking as an attendant of some guests. Such men are excluded and it is not necessary to observe *ḥijāb* before them. They have been mentioned here because in fact there were some such men at that time, and they used to go inside the homes, only with the intention of eating and drinking, but the real cause of their being excepted from the rules of *ḥijāb* is their being of unsound mind and having no sexual urge and not being attendants of someone

Twelfth category

أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ (or to the children who are not yet conscious of the shames of women - 31). This refers to those young children who have not yet attained puberty, and are totally ignorant of ladies special attributes, gestures and postures. Any boy who takes interest in ladies company for their special attributes is nearing his puberty, and covering before him becomes obligatory. (Ibn Kathīr). Imām Jaṣṣāṣ رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى has explained that the word *Tifl* (children) refers here to those children who do not differentiate between men and women in special attributes. (Jaṣṣāṣ has narrated this from Mujāhid).

وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ

And let them not stamp their feet in a way that the adornment they conceal is known - 24:31.

It is incumbent upon women to step so gently that no sound is made of their ornaments and none of their *zīnah* is exposed to men.

To cause hearing of jewellery's sound to non-Maḥrams is prohibited

In the beginning of the verse it was prohibited for women to show their *zīnah* (ornaments or garments) to non-Maḥram men. At the end of it, it is reemphasized that covering of head and bosom etc. was in any way obligatory as part of hiding of *zīnah*, rather any exposure of hidden *zīnah* by any means is also prohibited. Putting in something in the ornaments so that they produce sound, or making of sound by the touch of ornaments with each other, or putting the feet on the ground in such a manner that ornaments make sound, and the non-Maḥrams listen to these sounds; they are all prohibited under the provision of this verse. In the light of this explanation many jurists have drawn the conclusion that when causing to hear the ornament's sound is prohibited, then to cause hearing of women's own voice would be prohibited even more strongly. Therefore, they have ruled that the voice of women is also included in their *satr*. For this reason it is declared in *Nawāzil* that women should learn Qur'ān from women only, as far as possible. Learning of Qur'ān from men should be as a last resort only.

Ṣaḥīḥs of Bukhārī and Muslim have quoted a *ḥadīth* which says that while offering prayers if someone passes in front, he should be warned with a loud voice by saying *Subhān Allāh* by men, but the women should not make any sound, and instead hit the back of the palm with the other for warning.

The issue of women's voice

Is women's voice included in their *satr* per se, and it's causing to hear by non-Maḥrams is prohibited? The jurists differ on this issue. In the books of Imām Shafī' رحمه الله تعالى the voice of women is not included in their *satr*. In the case of Ḥanafī there are different views. Ibn Humām رحمه الله تعالى has included the voice in *satr* on the basis of statements in *Nawāzil*. Because of this the call for prayer اذان by women is regarded

makrūh by Ḥanafī School. However, it is established by *ḥadīth* that the wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to talk to non-Maḥrams from behind the curtain even after the revelation of injunction of *ḥijāb*. Keeping in view all the material on this point, what seems to be the correct position is that hearing the voice of a woman is impermissible only when and where it may create a *fitnah*, but where there is no such apprehension, it is allowed. (Jaṣṣāṣ). However, the prudent way for women is to take care and avoid talking to non-Maḥrams, even from behind the curtains, unless necessary. (Only Allah knows best)

To go out wearing perfume

It is also included in this injunction that when women go out of the house for some need, they should not wear any perfume, because that is also their hidden *zīnah*, and it is impermissible to cause it to reach non-Maḥrams. In a *ḥadīth* reported by Tirmidhī from Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī ؓ those women are declared bad who go out wearing perfume.

Going out wearing decorated veil is also prohibited

Imām Jaṣṣāṣ رحمه الله تعالى has commented that when Qur'ān has included even the sound of ornaments as the exposure of *zīnah* and declared it unlawful, then going out wearing decorated veil would be unlawful more strongly. By inference it is also clear that although the face of women is not included in her *satr*, but it is the pivotal point of *zīnah*, hence, its hiding from the non-Maḥrams is essential, except in cases of need. (Jaṣṣāṣ)

وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

And repent to Allah O believers, all of you - 24:31.

In this verse first the men have been enjoined to keep their eyes low, then the women are enjoined the same. After that women are directed to cover themselves before non-Maḥrams. After enjoining these injunctions separately to men and women, now a combined instruction is given that the sexual desire is a delicate thing, and it remains concealed from others. But everything, concealed or open, is completely known to Allah. Therefore, if someone has erred in following the foregoing injunctions, he should beg Allah's pardon, feel repentant on his past deeds and make a firm resolve not to indulge in them again.

Verse 32 - 33 ...

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيَامَىٰ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ ۖ إِنْ
يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٢﴾
وَلْيَسْتَغْفِرِ الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ نِكَاحًا حَتَّىٰ يُغْنِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ

And arrange the marriage of the spouse-less among you, and the capable from among your bond-men and bond-girls. If they are poor, Allah will enrich them out of His grace. And Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing. [32] And those who cannot afford marriage should keep chaste until Allah enriches them out of His grace...

Commentary

Some injunctions regarding marriage

It has been pointed out earlier that Sūrah an-Nūr contains mostly the injunctions relating to protection of chastity and continence, and prevention of obscenity and shamelessness. In this connection severe punishments against adultery and related matters are mentioned, then *isti'dhān* is highlighted, and after that *hijāb* for women is described. Since Islamic jurisprudence is based on the precept of moderation, all its injunctions are moderate, and have affinity with natural human emotions and desires. It is also based on the principle to control the tendency of excessiveness and transgression. When it is enjoined to desist strictly from unlawful lust, it is equally important to provide a lawful access for the natural human emotions and desires. At the same time it is also needed both from a rational and religious point of view that men and women are shown a way for the lawful copulation for the preservation of human race. In the terminology of Qur'ān and Sunnah it is called *nikāḥ* (marriage). In the verse under consideration the guardians of unmarried girls and the owners of slave girls and boys are enjoined to marry them off.

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيَامَىٰ مِنْكُمْ

And arrange the marriage of the spouse-less among you - 24:32.

Ayamā (أَيَامَى) is the plural of Aym (أَيِّم), which is used for all those men and women who are not married, irrespective of the situation whether

they have not yet been married or were married earlier and have become divorcee or widow /widower. The guardians of such men and women are directed in this verse to arrange their marriage.

Scholars and jurists are unanimous on the point that according to the manner of address of this verse the preferable and *masnūn* way of marriage is that men and women have it arranged through their guardians, rather than arranging it directly. There are many a worldly and religious benefits in this tradition, especially in the case of girls it is a sort of indecency that they arrange their own marriages. Also, there is a risk that this system may open the doors for obscenity. Therefore, in some narrations of *ḥadīth* women are prohibited to contract their own marriages without the mediation of guardians. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى and some other Imāms have ruled that this instruction describes a *sunnah* and the preferred way for the contract of marriage. But if an adult girl marries someone within her own *kuf'* without her guardian's permission, it is a proper marriage, although she would be reprehensible for this act, because it is against the *sunnah*, unless she has done so under unavoidable circumstances.

Imām Shafi' رحمه الله تعالى and some other Imāms have ruled that her marriage will be null and void if carried out without her guardian's mediation. It is not the intention to describe and argue here the details of approach and arguments put forward by the two jurists on their different points of view, but this much is obvious from the verse under discussion that it is preferable to have guardian's mediation in the matter of marriage. But the Qur'ānic verse itself is silent on the issue of status of marriage, if solemnized without the consent of guardians. The other reason is that in the word *Ayāmā* (أَيَّامَى) both male and female adults are included, and there is consensus that the marriage of adult boys is perfectly valid if solemnized without the mediation of guardians. No one considers that marriage to be null and void. But this is true that in either case it is against the *sunnah*, for which both should be reproached.

The status of marriage in Shari'ah

Jurists are almost all unanimous that whoever has a strong apprehension that in case he does not marry, he would not be able to maintain the prescribed limits of Shari'ah and will get involved in sins, and he has the means to get married, it is obligatory on him to get

married. As long as he does not get married, he will remain a sinner. But in case he does not have the means to get married, or a suitable woman is not available, or he does not possess the needed prompt dower etc. for all such situations the injunction is given in the next verse that he should keep striving to obtain what is required and until such time that the needful is arranged, he should keep his emotions under control and wait with patience. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has advised such persons in this situation to fast continuously, for fasting calms down the sexual desire.

It is reported in Masnād of Aḥmad that the Holy Prophet ﷺ enquired from Sayyidnā 'Akkāf ؓ whether he had a wife, to which he replied in the negative. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ enquired whether he had a lawful slave girl. He again replied in the negative. Then he ﷺ asked 'Do you have the means?'. To this he replied in the affirmative. The purpose of this enquiry was to find out whether he possessed the means to arrange his marriage, to which he answered in the positive. After that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said 'In that case you are a brother of Satan, for our *sunnah* is to get married. The worst persons among you are those who are unmarried, and the most mean among your men are those who die without marrying'. (Maḏharī).

Majority of the jurists have attributed this narration as well to that condition when there is a predominant risk of sinning by abstaining from marriage. The Holy Prophet ﷺ must have known the situation of 'Akkāf that he would not be able to resist. Similarly, it is reported in Masnād of Aḥmad on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Anas ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had instructed him to get married, and warned against remaining bachelor. (Maḏharī). There are some other similar narrations of the *ḥadīth* as well, and majority of the jurists have held them to be applicable only in those situations where there is a strong apprehension of being involved in a sin if one avoids marriage. Similarly, jurists are almost all unanimous that if someone has strong notion that he would indulge in sin by marrying a woman, for instance he is not capable of meeting conjugal rights of the wife or will get involved for sure in some other sin, in such a situation marriage is prohibited or unbecoming for him.

Now the case of that person has to be looked at who is in an even position. For him neither the risk of sin is very strong by abstaining from marriage, nor there is a strong risk of sin if the marriage is performed. For

this situation there are different views of the jurists, that is, which act is better; to get married or abstaining from marriage and get involved in extra prayers. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى has ruled that getting married is better than offering extra prayers, while Imām Shafi' رحمه الله تعالى has recommended that getting involved in prayers is preferable. The reason for the different views is that by itself the marriage is a lawful act, just like eating, drinking sleeping etc. or as any other necessity of life is lawful, and the element of worship is included in marriage for the simple reason that one can save himself from sin by this act, and when the righteous children are born, it will add up to his reward. When one performs any lawful act with the intent of pleasing Allah Ta'ālā, it becomes an indirect worship for him. Eating, drinking, sleeping etc. all become indirect worship when carried out with this intention. Since occupation in prayers is a direct worship in itself, hence, Imām Shafi' رحمه الله تعالى regards prayers to be preferable to marriage. But in the opinion of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى the element of worship is greater in marriage than other lawful acts. In many Ṣaḥīḥ *aḥadīth* it is emphasized repeatedly to follow this tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In the light of all these *aḥadīth* it becomes evident that marriage is not just lawful like other lawful acts, but is a *sunnah* (practice) of the messengers, and has also been emphasized repeatedly in *ḥadīth*. It is a worship not only from the viewpoint of intention but also being a tradition of the messengers. If someone suggests that by the same token eating, drinking and sleeping should also be regarded as *sunnah*, because all messengers used to perform them. The answer to this is very clear that despite these acts being performed by all messengers, no one has said or narrated in any *ḥadīth* that eating, drinking and sleeping are *sunnah* of the messengers. Instead these acts are regarded as common human habits, which were observed by messengers as well. As against this, marriage is clearly declared as *sunnah* of the messengers and the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself.

Tafsīr Maḥzarī has given a moderate view on the subject that, if someone is on an even position, that is neither he is helpless or overcome by prevalence of lust, nor feels the risk of indulging in sin by abstaining from marriage, and thinks that if he gets married, his involvement in household would not be a hindrance in his worships and remembrance of

Allah Ta'ālā, then it is preferable for him to get married. This was exactly the case of the messengers of Allah and the righteous people of the Ummah. But if he has a hunch that his marriage and involvement in household will not let him promote his religious status and will hinder Allah's remembrance, then for him abstaining from marriage for performing worship would be preferable, provided he is in an even position, described above. Many a Qur'ānic verses are in support of this position, one of them being: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ (O believers, let not your possessions nor your children divert you from Allah's remembrance - 63:9). This verse advises that the wealth and children should not come in the way of remembering Allah Ta'ālā.

وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ

And the capable from among your bond-men and bond-girls -
24:32.

This sentence is addressed to the masters of the slaves. Here the word *ṣāliḥīn* is used in its literal meaning, that is whoever among them has the means and capacity of marrying; arrangement of his/her marriage is made incumbent upon their owners and masters. Here the word capacity is purported to have the means to fulfill the conjugal rights of wife and ability to make payment of maintenance and prompt dower. If the word *ṣāliḥīn* is taken in its common sense, that is good and pious people, then their exclusiveness from the rest will be on the basis that marriage is basically the means to keep away from the sins, a trait which only the good persons possess.

So, it is made incumbent upon the masters of the slaves and slave girls that those among them who have the ability to get married, their marriage should be arranged. It is purported to mean here that if they show their need and desire to get married, then according to some jurists it is binding on the owners to marry them off. But the majority of jurists have ruled that in such a situation it is incumbent upon the masters not to place any hindrance in their marriage and allow them to get married, because the marriage of slaves and slave girls cannot be performed without the permission of their owners. Thus, this injunction is similar in nature with another verse of the Holy Qur'ān *فَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ أَنْ يَنْكَحْنَ أَرْوَاجَهُنَّ* that is ' It is incumbent upon the guardians of women not to stop the

women under their charge from marriage'. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has also said on the subject that 'If someone of that kind comes to you with the proposal and you like his morals, then surely marry him off. If you do not do it then great mischief will be created on earth'. (Tirmidhī) The gist of this all is that the owners are instructed here not to make any delay in granting permission of marriage to their subjects, notwithstanding that arrangement of their marriage may not be their responsibility. (Allah knows best)

إِنْ يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ

If they are poor, Allah will enrich them out of His grace - 24:32.

There is a good news in this verse for such poor Muslims who want to marry for the security of their religious obligation, but they have no means. If they marry with the good intention for the security of their religion and to follow the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Allah Ta'ālā will grant them sufficient means. There is also an advice in the verse to those who might reject the proposal of marriage from poor people on the basis of their current condition. Wealth is something which does not always stay. The important thing is merit of a person. If they possess merit then their proposal for marriage should not be turned down.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has said that Allah Ta'ālā has persuaded all Muslims for marriage in this verse, for which He has included every one, either free or slave, and has promised to enrich them if they marry. (Ibn Kathīr). And Ibn Abī Ḥātim has reported that Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ while addressing the Muslims said that 'You follow the injunction of Allah Ta'ālā for marriage, and He will fulfill His promise for granting the riches'. Then he recited this verse إِنْ يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ (32) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ has said 'If you want to be rich, then get married, because Allah Ta'ālā has said إِنْ يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ (Ibn Kathīr)

Warning

It is commented in Tafsīr Mazharī that it should, however, be noted that Allah Ta'ālā's promise to grant riches to the one who will marry is only on the condition that his intention is to safeguard his chastity and to follow the *sunnah*. After that he should have trust and faith in Allah Ta'ālā, for which the confirmation is available in the next verse, which reads: وَلَيْسَتَعَفِيفَ الدِّينِ لَا يَجِدُونَ نِكَاحًا حَتَّى يُغْنِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ (And those who cannot

afford marriage should keep chaste until Allah enriches them out of His grace - 24:33). 'It means that the people who do not have the material wealth for the marriage, and in case they marry, there is the risk of not fulfilling the rights of wife and their becoming sinners, they should wait with patience until Allah grants them riches from His bounty. A method has been stated in the *ḥadīth* for achieving the required patience, which is keeping fasts abundantly. If they will follow the advice, Allah Ta'ālā will grant them so much material resources that they will be able to afford the expenses of marriage.

... Verse 33

وَالَّذِينَ يَبْتَغُونَ الْكِتَابَ مِمَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ فَكَاتِبُوهُمْ إِنْ عَلِمْتُمْ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا ۚ وَآتُوهُمْ مِّنْ مَّالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي آتَاكُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَكْرِهُوا فَتِيَّتَكُمْ عَلَى الْبِغَاءِ إِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ تَحْصِنَ ۚ لَّيَبْتَغُوا عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَمَنْ يُكْرِهْنَهُنَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِكْرَاهِهِنَّ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

... And those of your slaves who seek the contract of Kitābah (emancipation by paying money), contract Kitābah with them, if you know of some good in them. And give them out of the wealth of Allah that He has given to you. And do not compel your maids to prostitution – if they wish to observe chastity – in order that you may seek the temporary benefit of the worldly life. And if one compels them, then after their being compelled, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.

[33]

Commentary

Owners of the slaves and slave girls were advised in the previous verse that they should allow their subjects to marry if they so desire. They should not delay their marriage to curb their natural urge for their own expediency. The essence of this advice is to save the subjects from trouble and that they be treated graciously. In the same context another direction is given in this verse to the owners of slaves and slave girls that if their subjects wish to enter into a deal with them for making payment against their freedom, then it is desirable for the owners to concede to this wish,

which will bring them good reward. This instruction is commonly taken by the jurists, like the author of *Hidāyah*, as a recommendatory instruction in that it is not compulsory for the owners to concede for freedom of their subjects against payment, yet it is preferable to do so. The procedure for entering into a deal of freedom is that the subject asks his owner to set up an amount with mutual consent for the freedom, which he should earn with his labour and pay to the owner. Alternatively, the owner can also initiate the deal and with mutual consent on payment of a certain amount whereby the slaves can earn their freedom. When such a deal is struck with mutual consent between the owner and the slave, then it becomes mandatory under Islamic law, and the owner has no authority to call it off. As soon as the slave makes the payment of the agreed amount, he gets free automatically.

The amount of money so agreed for the freedom of slave is called *badal-al-kitābah* for which Islamic law has fixed no limit. It may be the same as the cost of slave, or more or less. The amount on which the parties mutually agree will be regarded as *badal-al-kitābah*. The essence behind the advice given in this verse is to open up the doors of freedom for the slaves. This is but one such instruction which points out toward the underlying objective of Islamic law of allowing freedom for slaves. In all types of expiations, a common injunction is freedom of slaves. Even otherwise, there is a promise of generous blessings for freeing the slaves. Arrangement of the treaty for freedom in exchange of money is one such route. This is why there is so much persuasion and emphasis on this. However, a condition has also been placed with this treaty *إِنْ عَلِمْتُمْ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا* (33). The treaty will only be in order when you notice signs of goodness in them. Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه and many other scholars have explained that here the word 'Khair' (good) is purported to mean the strength to earn. Hence, it means that someone who has the strength to earn and can make payment should be allowed to enter the deal, otherwise his labour will be wasted on one hand and the owner will also suffer loss. Some other scholars have given another explanation that goodness and betterment mean here that there should be no risk of any harm to the Muslims because of his freedom. For instance, the slave may be an infidel and he might have been helping his infidel brethren. As a matter of fact the word 'Khair' (good) stands here for both the meanings,

that is the slave should have the strength to earn, and there should be no risk of any harm to the Muslims as a result of his freedom. (Maẓharī)

وَأَتَوْهُمْ مِنْ مَالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي آتَاكُمْ

Give them out of the wealth of Allah that He has given to you -
24:33.

This address is directed towards Muslims in general, and to the owners of the slaves in particular. When the freedom of a slave is dependent on a fixed amount to be given to his owner, then it is incumbent upon Muslims to help him collect that money. For this they can pay from the *zakāh* money as well. And the owners are induced to contribute on their own or reduce the amount of the treaty. It was the practice of the Companions to reduce the amount of treaty by one third or one fourth, depending upon their capacity. (Maẓharī)

An important economic issue and the Qur̄ānic verdict on it

The present day world is totally materialistic. Everyone seems to have forgotten about the life hereafter and has completely entangled himself in money making. All types of researches, contemplation and developments, revolve round economic uplift only. Detailed discussions and researches on finer economic points have raised its status many fold, and now it has assumed the position of greatest art. The world thinkers have propounded two well-known theories, which, paradoxically, are in conflict with each other. Because of the inherent conflict between them, the world at large is divided in two groups, who are unfortunately at daggers drawn with each other, resulting in the loss of peace and tranquility of the world.

One theory has given birth to capitalist system, commonly known as capitalism. The other one is the socialist system which is called as socialism or communism. It is an every day common experience, which neither of the two systems can deny, that whatever the man earns or produces in this world through his hard work, its basic source of production is the natural resources, like water, the produce from earth or any other natural produce. The man produces millions of things of his need and use from natural resources through his skill, hard work, ingenuity and composing or decomposing their certain elements. It is but natural to think that there is someone who creates the natural resources. They have not come into being of their own. It also goes without saying

that the One who has created the natural resources is the real owner and master of them all. The natural resources have been passed on to man for a limited period (his life span) for his benefit and use. It does not mean that the man has become the master of natural resources for all times, because his own life is so short. Moreover, man does not, and cannot, exercise total control and authority on all natural resources for all the time. For instance, man can irrigate the fields with water, but he cannot create water if there is a drought. Therefore, it is clear that man is not free to use or control them, and hence should follow the instructions given to him by their Creator and Master. But in the frenzy of materialism everyone has forgotten even the concept of real Master and Creator. The only controversy between them is that whether the one who possesses the factors of production becomes their owner, or all these resources are common to all and everyone has a right to benefit from them.

The first theory is that of the capitalist system which grants freedom of ownership to man in that he can acquire anything by any means, and is also free to use and spend it any way he likes. There is absolutely no restriction on him. The infidels and disbelievers of the olden times professed the same belief, who objected before Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام as to why should he place any restriction on their wealth, which belonged to them and they were its owners. They claimed that the prophet had no right to tell them as to where the spending was permitted and where it was not? The meaning of Qur'ānic verse *أَوْ أَنْ تَفْعَلَ فِي أَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشَاءُ* (or that we do with our wealth what we wish - 11:87) is the same. The other theory is that of socialism, which does not allow ownership to anyone of any thing, and professes common ownership of everyone and equal right to all. This is the original theory of communism, but when they felt that this is not practicable, they exempted some objects from the common ownership.

As against these two extremes the Holy Qur'ān has given a system in which the most fundamental concept is that every thing belongs to Allah Ta'ālā, who has given the charge of some things to man temporarily by His grace and bounty. For such things where man has been given the charge and possession, others have been debarred to make any claim on their use, without the permission of the owner. But despite the possession and ownership being given to man, he is not granted freedom to earn or spend them in any manner he likes. Both for earning and spending there

are wise and equitable rules and regulations which are clearly defined, and which clearly identify the permissible and impermissible ways of earning and spending. In addition to this, it has also been made incumbent upon him to pass on certain part of his possession to others, which is made the right of recipients on those things.

Although the verse under reference deals with a different subject yet it contains some important principles relating to this economic issue. So, look at the wordings of the verse rather intently **وَأَتَوْهُمْ مِنْ مَالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي آتَاكُمْ** 'Give them out of the wealth of Allah that He has given to you - 33'. Three things come out of this statement. One, that Allah is the real owner of every thing. Two, that He has given the possession of certain things to man by His grace. Three, that there are certain restrictions on things which He has given to man. Spending of certain things has been prohibited, and spending of other things is made obligatory, while spending of some others is made preferable.

The other injunction given in this verse is for the eradication of an uncouth custom, and for curbing adultery and obscenity **وَلَا تُكْرِهُوا فَتِيحَكُمْ عَلَى الْبَغَاءِ** 'Do not compel your maid to prostitution - 33'. During the pre-Islamic period many people used to have this business done by their slave girls. When Islam placed strict punishments on adultery, both on free and slave individuals, then it was necessary to enjoin special strict orders to stop and eradicate this uncivilized custom.

إِنْ أَرَادْنَ تَحْصُنَا (If they wish to observe chastity - 24:33). It means that when those slave girls express their wish to avoid adultery and remain pure, then pressurizing them on your part is extremely imprudent and shameless. Although the wording of the injunction is conditional, yet there is consensus of Ummah that the intention here is not to press the slave girls for adultery, irrespective of the situation whether they express their wish to avoid it or not. In other words, it is not meant here that in case they do not wish to avoid adultery, then it is permitted to force them into it. What is intended here is to tell that in the pre-Islamic days obscenity was common, so the slave girls did not mind adultery. Although after the advent of Islam they repented and wished not to be involved in this practice, yet their owners still forced them for the crime, which they resented. On this situation this injunction was revealed, in which their owners are warned and reproached that while they (the slave girls) want

to avoid a shameful act, you are trying to force it on them.

فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِكْرَاهِهِمْ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Then after their being compelled, Allah is Most-Forgiving,
Very-Merciful - 33.

The gist of this sentence is that it is prohibited to force the slave girls to adultery. If someone does that and the slave girl gets involved in adultery because of the compulsion exercised by her owner, then Allah Ta'ālā will pardon her sin and that sin will be passed on to the one who had forced her. (Maẓharī).

Verses 34 - 40

وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ آيَاتٍ مُبَيِّنَاتٍ وَمَثَلًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِن قَبْلِكُمْ
وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾ اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ مِثْلُ نُورِهِ
كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ ۚ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ ۚ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا
كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِن شَجَرَةٍ مُّبَرَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَّا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ ۚ
يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ ۚ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ ۚ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ
لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۚ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٥﴾ فِى يَبُوتِ آذِنَ اللَّهِ أَن تَرْفَعَ وَيَذْكُرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ ۚ يُسَبِّحُ
لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ ﴿٣٦﴾ رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ
ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ ۚ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ
الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ ﴿٣٧﴾ لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَيَزِيدَهُم
مِّن فَضْلِهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَن يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ ۖ بِقِيعَةٍ يَحْسَبُهُ الظَّمْآنُ مَاءً ۚ حَتَّى إِذَا
جَاءَهُ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا وَوَجَدَ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ ۖ فَوَقَّعَهُ حِسَابُهُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ
الْحِسَابِ ﴿٣٩﴾ أَوْ كَظُلُمٍ ۖ فِى بَحْرِ لُجِّيٍّ يَّغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّن فَوْقِهِ

مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ ۚ طُلُمْتُۙ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ ۚ إِذَا أَخْرَجَ
يَدَهُ لَمْ يَكْذُ يَرَهَا ۚ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُّورٍ

﴿٤٠﴾

And indeed We have sent down to you enlightening verses and an exemplary description of those who passed away before you and a good counsel for the God-fearing. [34]

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is that of a niche in which there is a lamp; the lamp is in a glass - the glass looks like a brilliant star - it is lit by (the oil of) a blessed tree, the olive, which is neither eastern, nor western. Its oil is about to emit light even if fire has not touched it - (it is) light upon light. Allah guides to His light whomsoever He wills. And Allah describes examples for the people, and Allah knows everything well. [35]

(The guided people worship Allah) in the houses that Allah has permitted to be raised and where His name is recounted and His purity is pronounced, in the morning and in the evening, [36] by men whom no trade or sale makes neglectful of the remembrance of Allah, nor from establishing Ṣalāh and paying Zakāh; they are fearful of a day in which the hearts and the eyes will be overturned. [37] The fate (of such people) is that Allah will reward them for the best deeds they did and will give them more out of His grace. And Allah gives whom He wills without counting. [38]

As for those who disbelieve, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert plane which a thirsty person deems to be water, until when he comes to it, he finds it nothing, and finds (the decree of) Allah with him, so He pays him his account in full. And Allah is swift at reckoning. [39] Or (their deeds) are like layers of darkness in a vast deep sea overwhelmed by a wave, above which there is another wave, above which there are clouds - layers of darkness, one above the other. When one puts forth his hand, he can hardly see it. And

the one to whom Allah does not give light can have no light at all. [40]

Commentary

The scholars call this verse as the 'Verse of Radiance', because it describes in great detail the radiance of faith and the darkness of disbelief.

The definition of Nūr (Light)

Imām Ghazzālī رحمه الله تعالى has given the definition of Nūr (light) as الظاهر بنفسه والمظهر لغيره that is something which is bright and manifest on its own, and makes other things bright and evident. Tafsir Maḥzarī has explained that Nūr is in fact that condition which is initially perceived by man's sense of sight, and then through that perception he comprehends all those things which can be seen by eye, such as in the case of rays of sun and the moon, which on falling on a solid mass brightens it up, and then through the reflection from solid mass brightens other things. Hence, it is evident that the word Nūr cannot be used for Allah Ta'ālā in its literal or common meaning, because He is free from body and materiality. Therefore, there is consensus among the scholars that the use of word Nūr for Allah Ta'ālā in the verse under reference is purported for *Munawwir*, meaning the one who brightens, or may be the master of brightening is referred here as Nūr, in the same way as the possessor of grace is sometimes called Grace, or the possessor of justice is called the Justice. So, meaning of the verse is that Allah bestows Nūr to earth and the heaven, and to everything living there, and the Nūr is purported to be the Nūr of righteousness. Ibn Kathīr has reported the explanation put forward by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that : (that is, Allah is the Guide of all living in the heavens and the earth).

Nūr of the believer

مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكُوهٍ (The example of His light is that of a niche in which there is a lamp - 24:35). This is a nice example of Allah Ta'ālā's Nūr of guidance, which penetrates into the heart of the believer. Ibn Jarīr has reported its explanation put forward by Sayyidnā Ubayy b. Ka'b ؓ.

هو المؤمن الذي جعل الله الايمان والقران في صدره، فضرب الله مثله فقال: الله نور السموات والارض، فبدأ بنور نفسه ثم ذكر نور المؤمن، فقال: مثل نور من امن به، فكان ابي بن كعب يقرأها مثل نور من امن به. (ابن كثير)

It means that this is the example of the believer in whose heart Allah Ta'ālā has laid down the Nūr of faith and of the Qur'ān. In this verse Allah Ta'ālā has first mentioned His own Nūr **اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ**, and then the Nūr of the believer's heart and the following example is for the one who believes in Him. Sayyidnā Ubayy Ibn Ka'b رضي الله عنه used to recite this verse as **مثل نور من آمن به** instead of **مثل نوره** (to explain this). Sa'īd Ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه has also reported the same meaning and recitation of the verse from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه. Ibn Kathīr has narrated all these explanations and then remarked that there are two view points among the jurists about the pronoun of **مِثْلُ نُورِهِ** (the example of *his* light). One, that this pronoun has reference toward Allah Ta'ālā, and thus the meaning of the verse is 'Allah's Nūr placed in the heart of believers naturally', and the example of that is **كَمِشْكُورَةٍ** (like a niche). This explanation is put forward by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه. The other explanation is that the personal pronoun refers to the believers, who are presumed to have been referred to by the context. So, the example given in the verse can be explained as follows: The chest of a believer is like a niche, while the heart of the believer placed in the chest is like a lamp (placed in the niche). Then the transparent oil of olive is the example of the natural *nūr* (light) of guidance which is deposited in the nature of a believer and which has the inherent capability to accept the truth (which is indicated in the verse by the words 'Its oil is about to emit light even if fire has not touched it). Then as the olive oil produces brightness when caused to burn with the flame of fire, the same way natural Nūr of guidance which is placed in the heart of the believer, when joins the message and knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā, then it gets brightened and also brightens the world. When the companions and their pupils confined this example to the heart of a believer alone, they have most probably done so because it is only the believer who draws benefit from this Nūr. Otherwise the natural Nūr of guidance which is placed in the hearts of humans at the time of their creation, is not confined to believers, but is part of the nature and instinct of every human being. It is for this reason that one can see all around the world that there are people in every nook and corner, in all societies and religions, who believe in the existence of God and His Omnipotence, and do turn towards Him. No matter one may make all types of errors in the perception and understanding of God, yet every individual does believe by nature in His existence, with the exception of a few atheists, who have

lost their natural instinct.

A Ṣaḥīḥ *ḥadīth* endorses this view, which says, *كُلُّ مَوْلُودٍ يُوَلَّدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ*, that is 'Every child is born with natural instinct'. Later, his parents put him on the wrong path. This natural instinct is the guidance of faith. The guidance of faith and its Nūr is bestowed to every individual at the time of his birth, and because of this Nūr of guidance, one possesses the ability to accept the truth. When they come to know about the revelations of Allah through His messengers and their deputies, they readily accept them, except those unfortunate people who have erased the Divine Nūr from their heart with their wrong doings. Perhaps this is the reason that in the beginning of the verse the bestowal of Nūr is said to be common to all, which includes every one on the earth and the heavens, without any difference between believers or disbelievers, but towards the end of the verse it is said *يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ*, that is 'Allah Ta'ālā guides to His light whomsoever He wills - 35'. Here the will of Allah is not pointing toward that Divine Nūr which is bestowed to all humans, but toward the Qur'ānic Nūr, which is not availed by every one, except those fortunate ones, to whom Divine help is granted. Otherwise even one's endeavor goes waste without Divine help, and sometimes becomes detrimental :

إذا لم يكن عون من الله للفتى فأول ما يجنى عليه اجتهاده

'If there is no help to man from Allah, then his striving puts him to trouble instead'.

The Nūr of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Imām Baghawī رحمه الله تعالى has narrated that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ once enquired from Ka'b al-Aḥbār as to how would he explain this verse *مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ*. Ka'b al-Aḥbār, who was a great Muslim scholar of Torah and Injīl, said that this example was meant for the heart of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Mishkāṭ (the niche) stands for his chest, Zujājah (glass) for his heart and Miṣbāḥ (lamp) for his prophethood. What was unique about this Nūr of prophethood was that even before the declaration of prophethood it had the illumination of light for the people. When the revelation from Allah is coupled with the Nūr of prophethood, then it turns into such radiance that the whole world is brightened.

Before the declaration of prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and even before his birth, some strange and amazing events had taken place

in the world, which were in fact advance notice of the incoming prophet, and are called *Irḥaṣāt* in the vocabulary of the scholars of *ḥadīth*. The difference between this word and miracle is that the latter is used for such unusual events which are bestowed by Allah Ta‘ālā to his messengers for the endorsement of their prophethood, while *Irḥaṣāt* are those unusual events which happen before the declaration of prophethood. There are a number of unusual incidents which are recorded by several authentic narrations, and have been compiled by Shaikh Jalaluddīn Sayuṭī رحمه الله in his book (خصائص كبرى) - Khaṣāiṣ Kubrā – and by Abū Nu‘aim in his دلائل النبوة - Dalail-un-Nubuwwah. Other scholars have also collected many such incidents in their books. Tafsīr Maḥzarī has reproduced a good number of these events.

Benefits of olive oil

شَجَرَةٌ مُبَارَكَةٌ زَيْتُونَةٍ (A blessed tree, the olive - 35.). This is an endorsement that olive and its tree is blessed by Allah and is beneficial and useful. Scholars have commented that Allah Ta‘ālā has instilled many a benefits in it. Olive oil is used in the burning of lamps. Its light is the brightest and clearest as against any other oil. It is eaten as a fruit and its oil is used in cooking. The interesting part is that there is no need of any machine for the extraction of its oil. When the fruit is ripe, the oil comes out automatically. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has asked to eat and massage the body with olive oil. (Baghawī – Maḥzarī)

فِي بُيُوتٍ إِذْنُ اللَّهِ أَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ، لَا يَسْبَحُ لَهُ، فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ

(The guided people worship Allah) in the houses that Allah has permitted to be raised and where His name recounted and His purity is pronounced, in the morning and in the evening, - 36.

In the previous verse Allah Ta‘ālā had given a unique example of placing His Nūr of guidance in the heart of believers. Toward the end of the verse it was clarified that only those draw benefit from this Nūr, whom Allah loves and grants Divine help. In the above verse those places and buildings are referred to where such believers spend most of their time, especially the five times of prayers. These are the buildings for which Allah Ta‘ālā has instructed to keep them high in esteem, and where His name be remembered. The splendor of such buildings is that Allah’s name is remembered there in the morning and evening. That is He is worshipped there all the time by the people, who’s attributes will

follow soon.

The above explanation is based on the assumption that *فِي بُيُوتٍ* (in the houses) has an association with the sentence *يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ* (Allah guides to this light whomsoever He wills). (Ibn Kathīr etc.) Some others are of the opinion that it has a link with the word *يُسَبِّحُ* (His purity is pronounced), which is used later in the verse. But the first version appears more appropriate in the context of the subject. In that case the meaning of the verse would be that the Nūr of guidance referred to in the example of the previous verse can be found in the buildings and houses where He is remembered all the time. There is consensus among commentators that here the word 'houses' is purported for mosques.

Mosques are houses of Allah and their respect is obligatory

Qurtubī has preferred the view that the word 'raised' used in the verse means to respect the mosques and has quoted the following *ḥadīth* of Sayyidnā 'Anas رضي الله عنه in support of his contention.

من أحب الله عز وجل فليحبني، ومن أحبني فليحب أصحابي، ومن أحب أصحابي فليحب القرآن، ومن أحب القرآن فليحب المساجد، فإنها أفضى الله أذن الله في رفعها وبارك فيها ميمونة ميمون أهلها محفوظة محفوظ أهلها، هم في صلاتهم والله عز وجل في حوائجهم هم في المساجد والله من ورائهم. (قرطبي)

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said "Whoever wishes to love Allah should love me, and whoever wishes to love me should love my companions, and whoever wishes to love my companions should love the Qur'ān, and whoever wishes to love Qur'ān should love the mosques, because they are Allah's houses. Allah has enjoined to 'raise' them, and has made them blessed. They are blessed and those who live there are also blessed. They are in the protection of Allah, and those who live there are also in the protection of Allah. Those who are busy there in their prayers, Allah get their works done and fulfill their needs. While they are in the mosques Allah protects their household during their absence". (Qurtubī)

Meaning of raising of mosques

إِذَنْ (That Allah has permitted to be raised - 36). The word *إِذَنْ* ('*adhina*') is derived from *إِذْنٌ* ('*idhn*'), which means to allow or give permission, and the word *تُرْفَعُ* (*turfa'a*) is derived from *رَفَعَ* (*raf'*), which means to raise, uplift or exalt. So, the meaning of this verse is that Allah

has allowed the raising of the mosques. Here 'allowed' means 'enjoined', and 'raising' means 'to venerate'. Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ has explained that Allah Ta‘ālā has prohibited Muslims from talking or doing anything absurd in the mosques. (Ibn Kathīr).

‘Ikrimah and Mujāhid رحمهم الله تعالى, the two Imāms of Tafsīr, are of the opinion that raising of the mosques carries here the sense of building the mosques in the same way as Qur’ān says about the building of Ka‘bah كَابِهَ الْبَيْتِ وَادُّ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ (And when Ibrahim was raising up the foundations of the House - 2:127). Here the raising of foundation is purported for building (construction) of foundation. Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى has given a different view that the word 'raised' is used here for respect and veneration of mosques, and to keep them clean from filthy and impure things, as narrated in a *ḥadīth* that, when an impure (*najis*) thing is brought in the mosque, it contracts itself in a similar manner as the human skin contracts from the fire. Sayyidnā Abū Sa‘īd Khudrī ؓ has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that whoever takes out dirty, impure and vexatious things from the mosque, Allah Ta‘ālā will make a house for him in paradise. (Ibn Mājah). Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها has narrated that ‘the Holy Prophet ﷺ instructed us to make mosques (special places for offering prayers) in our houses (as well), and keep them clean and pure’. (Qurṭubī).

As a matter of fact, the word تَرْفَعُ (to be raised) encompasses both the meanings of building and veneration of the mosques. It also signifies to keep them clean, which means to make them free of all types of filth and dirt. It is also part of cleanliness to keep them free of any foul smell. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited to go in the mosques without cleaning the mouth after eating onions or garlic, which is reported in many books of *ḥadīth*. Cigarettes, cigars and all other preparations of tobacco also fall under the same instruction. Burning any oil which emits foul odor is also not permitted in the mosque.

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim has recorded a narration from Sayyidnā ‘Umar ؓ that he said ‘I had seen that in case the Holy Prophet ﷺ noticed foul smell from someone’s mouth, he used to turn him out from the mosque and send to Baqī‘, and would say that if someone has to eat onion and garlic, he should cook it properly, so that its odor is eliminated’. Scholars have drawn the conclusion from this *ḥadīth* that if someone is suffering

from such a disease that people feel discomfort standing next to him in prayers, then he too can be removed from the mosque. In such an eventuality he should himself restrain from going to mosque and offer his prayers at home until such time that he is recovered from that disease.







Exaltation of Mosques



The majority of companions and *tābi'īn* (the generation next to them) are of the opinion that exaltation of mosques means that mosques be built and be kept free of every thing evil. Some people have also included in it the outward appearance and grandeur of the buildings of the mosques, and have argued that Sayyidnā 'Uthmān Ghani رضي الله عنه had used hard wood in the building of the Prophet's mosque to give it an impressive look. Later, Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn 'Abdul Azīz رحمه الله تعالى had the Prophet's mosque improved further both materially and by decoration. This was done during the lifetime of companions and their pupils, and no one objected to this. Later on, many a kings spent very lavishly on building of mosques. Walīd Ibn 'Abdul Mālīk had spent during his caliphate three times the annual income from the entire Syria on the construction and decoration of the Grand Mosque of Damascus, which is still there even now. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى has ruled that if there is no element of ostentation and egotism, and the intent is to please Allah and veneration of His house, then there is no objection in the construction and decoration of majestic and grandiose mosques, rather one should expect a good reward for that act.

Some merits of Mosques

Abū Dāwūd has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū 'Umamah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said that whoever gets out of his house after ablution with the intent of offering obligatory prayer in the mosque, his reward is like the one who has got off from his house wearing *iḥrām* for performing Ḥajj, and whoever gets out of his house after ablution for the prayer of Ishrāq in the mosque, his reward is like the one of performing 'Umrah. A prayer after another prayer, provided one does not talk or do any work in between, is written in *'illiyīn*. Further, it is reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Buraidah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that those who go to mosques in darkness, give them the good tiding of complete Nūr (light) on the Dooms Day. (Muslim)

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū

Hurairah  that the Holy Prophet  said that a man's offering of prayer in congregation is more than twenty times better than offering in the house or in the shop. It is because if someone sets out for the mosque after ablution with the intention of offering prayers and for no other purpose, then on every single step his status will improve by one degree and one sin will be forgiven until he reaches the mosque. Then as long as he will sit in the mosque waiting for the congregation to start, he will keep getting the reward of the prayers, and the angels will keep praying for him 'Ya Allah, Bestow Your grace on him, and forgive him, until he harms someone or his ablution is wasted'. Sayyidnā Ḥakam Ibn 'Umair  has narrated that the Holy Prophet  once said 'Live in this world like a guest and make mosques your abode, and make your hearts tender (be kind hearted) and ponder (over Allah's bounties) frequently, and weep (out of His fear) very often. Let not the mundane desires overcome you to make you change from this position, and you get involved in building houses unnecessarily, where you do not ever live, and get anxious to accumulate wealth more than your need, and desire for such things for the future which you cannot get'. Sayyidnā Abū Dardah  advised his son "Mosque should be your abode, because I have heard from the Holy Prophet  that 'Mosques are the abodes of Muttaqui (the God fearing) people. Whoever makes the mosque his abode (through remembering Allah abundantly) Allah Ta'ālā becomes guarantor for his comfort and tranquility, and to make him pass through the bridge of Širāt with ease". Abū Šādiq 'Azdī wrote to Shu'aib b. Ḥabḥāb in a letter 'Get hold of mosques as a necessity, because I have learnt a tradition saying that mosques were the meeting places of messengers'.

In a *ḥadīth* it is reported that the Holy Prophet  said 'Towards the end there will be people who will sit in the mosques in circles, and will discuss worldly affairs and their love for mundane benefits. You do not sit with those people who come to the mosques for this, because Allah does not need such people to come to the mosques. 'Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Musayyab  said that the one who sits in the mosque is like he sits in the company of his Lord, so it is incumbent upon him not to say anything but good words (Qurtubī).

Fifteen etiquettes of the mosques

Scholars have named fifteen items as etiquettes of the mosques. They

are:

On entering the mosque one should greet the people already sitting there, with *salām* and if there is no one then say *السلام علينا وعلى عباد الله* (But this is required when those present in the mosque are not offering their extra prayer or reciting Qur'ān. If they are busy in any of these acts, then he should not greet them.)

After getting in the mosque one should offer two Rak'ats as *tahiyyah tul-Masjid*. (This is required at a time when offering prayers is not prohibited, that is the time of sun rise, sun set or when sun is directly overhead)

Should not carry out any transactions of sale or purchase in the mosque.

Should not carry any weapons in the mosque.

Should not make an announcement for the search of any of his lost items.

Should not raise his voice in the mosque.

Should not discuss worldly affairs in the mosque.

Should not quarrel with any one in the mosque.

Should not try to force his way into a row where there is no room.

Should not cross over in front of someone offering prayer.

Should avoid spitting or blowing of nose in the mosque.

Should not crackle fingers in the mosque.

Should not play with any part of the body.

Should keep clean of any filth, and should not take a baby or an insane along in the mosque.

Should keep busy in remembrance of Allah abundantly.

After listing these fifteen etiquettes Qurtubī has remarked that whoever has fulfilled these requirements has done justice with the mosque, and it has become a place of charm and security for him.

I have written a booklet on etiquettes and formalities of mosques

under the title "آداب المساجد" (in Urdu). Anyone interested in the subject can consult it.

Houses meant exclusively for remembrance of Allah and for learning Qur'an or religious education also have the status of mosques

Abū Ḥayān has explained in Tafsīr Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ that the word **فِي بُيُوتٍ** "in the houses" used in Qur'an has a general connotation. It includes not only the mosques but also those houses which are exclusive for teaching Qur'an and related religious teachings, such as Madāris (religious schools) or Maktabas. They also fall under the same category, and their respect and veneration is also obligatory.

Special wisdom for using the word 'allowed' in the verse

Scholars are all unanimous that the word **أَذِنَ** *adhina* (allowed) is used here for command or order. But then the question is, what is the reason for using this word (instead of 'ordered' or 'enjoined')? Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī has described a subtle consideration in that the underlying objective is to train and induce the believers and the righteous to be ever ready to perform anything which is meant for pleasing Allah Ta'ālā, so much so that they need not be ordered to perform something for the pleasure of Allah, rather they should be waiting for the permission to perform it, and the moment they receive the go-ahead signal, they should hurry to carry it out.

يَذْكُرُ فِيهَا اسْمَهُ

Where His name is recounted - 36.

Here, the expression is 'recounting the name of Allah' encompasses all types of His remembrance, which include extra prayers, recitation of Qur'an, learning of Islamic teachings, sermons, lectures on Shari'ah, etc.

رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

By men whom no trade or sale makes neglectful of the remembrance of Allah - 37.

This verse describes special attributes of those believers who are the distinguished recipients of the Nūr of guidance and remain in the mosques. By the use of word *Rijāl* رِجَال (men) there is a hint that only men's presence is required in the mosques. For women it is better that

they offer their prayers at homes.

Musnad of Aḥmad and Baihaqī have related a *ḥadīth* of Sayyidah Umm Salmah رضى الله عنها that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said خير مساجد النساء . 'The best mosques for women are the secluded corners of their homes'.

This verse describes that the involvement in trade and sales does not stop the righteous believers from the remembrance of Allah. Since 'sale' is included in the word 'trade', some commentators have preferred to assume trade for purchase only for the sake of comparison, while others have taken the trade in its common sense, that is transactions of sale and purchase, and have explained the wisdom of using the word 'sale' separately for the reason that trade transactions have a wide scope where profits and benefits are received after a long time. On the other hand by selling something one receives the money with profit immediately in cash. Hence, it is mentioned separately to stress that they do not bring into consideration even the most lucrative mundane benefit as against the prayers and remembrance of Allah Ta'ālā.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه has said that this verse was revealed in connection with the market people, and his son, Sayyidnā Sālīm, has related that one day his father was passing through the market and the time for prayers had come. Then he noticed that people started closing their shops and set out to go towards the mosque. On that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه said that it is for these persons that the Qur'an has said رَجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ.

There were two companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ during his time, one was a general trader and the other a blacksmith who used to produce swords and sell them. It was the habit of the trader that when he would hear the call of the prayer while weighing something, he would leave every thing there and get up to go to the mosque for prayers. The other one who was the blacksmith, when he was busy hammering the hot iron and would hear the call of the prayer, he would stop his hand wherever it was and throw the hammer out of his hand to rush to the mosque for prayers, without even bothering to strike the raised hammer. This verse was revealed in their praise. (Qurṭubī)

Most of the companions were traders

This verse also points out that most of the companions were either traders or manufacturers, that is in the professions involved with the market, because the quality mentioned in the verse can be attributed only to those who are in the profession of trade and sales and do not let their profession interfere in the remembrance of Allah Ta'ālā. Otherwise it is irrelevant. (Rūḥ)

يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ

They are fearful of a day in which the hearts and the eyes will be overturned - 37.

The last quality of those believers who are mentioned in the above verse is that despite being busy in Allah's obedience, remembrance and worshipping all the time, they do not become careless or free themselves from Allah's fear. Instead the fear of reckoning on the Day of Judgment is constantly in their mind, which is the fruit of Nūr of guidance granted to them by Allah Ta'ālā, mentioned in the earlier verse يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ . Toward the end of the verse their reward is described that they shall be graced with the best reward for their actions by Allah Ta'ālā, and then the verse says: وَيَزِيدُ هُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهِ (and will give them more out of His grace - 38). It means that their reward will not end with the recompense against the good actions, but some extra reward will also be given on His own وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَن يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (and Allah gives whom He wills without counting - 38), that is neither Allah is bound by any rule nor does His treasure gets depleted. He grants unlimited sustenance to whomever He likes.

So far the righteous believers were described whose chests are the niches for the Nūr of guidance and who readily accept the Nūr of guidance. In verses 39 and 40 those disbelievers are being described who were given in their nature the Nūr of guidance by Allah Ta'ālā, but when Allah's revelation reached them to lit them up, they turned away to reject it and lost the Nūr to stay in the darkness. Since the disbelievers and atheists are of two types, therefore, two examples are related here. One category is that of those disbelievers who believe in the Dooms Day and Hereafter, and have faith that some of their good acts, according to their own reckoning, will be rewarded in the Hereafter. The second category is that of atheists, who do not believe in the Hereafter and the Dooms Day.

The example of the deeds of the first category is that of a mirage, which is nothing but illusion of sight. In a level plain the shining sand creates the illusion of water from a distance, and as a thirsty person approaches near it, the illusion (mirage) disappears, leaving the thirsty completely exhausted, who ultimately dies of thirst. Similarly, a disbeliever's deeds are like a mirage which he considers of value and benefit, but in actual fact they are no better than an illusion, like mirage, and as a thirsty person discovers the illusion when it is too late, in the same way the disbelievers will find out their blunder in the Hereafter, when it will be of no avail.

The second category of deeds is that of atheists or infidels, for which the example of a deep ocean is given, which is completely dark. In the first place it is dark because of its depth, then it is covered by a big wave which is also enshrouded by another wave, and over that there is a mass of dark cloud. In short there is darkness over darkness, so much so that if someone takes out his hand, he cannot have even a glimpse of it. The inference to be drawn from this example is that those infidels who deny the coming of the Dooms Day, the Reckoning and the Hereafter are devoid of even the illusive Nūr, which the first category of disbelievers had. Although they too did not possess the useful Nūr of guidance, but at least they were under the illusion that they had done some good deeds which will help them in the Hereafter, but the latter category did not deem it necessary to work for the Hereafter, since they had no belief in it. Hence, they will have nothing but darkness and complete darkness with them on the Dooms Day.

After describing the two examples the next sentence says: وَمَنْ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُورٍ (And the one to whom Allah does not give light can have no light at all - 40).

This sentence about the disbelievers is like the one that appeared earlier for the believers: يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ (Allah guides to His light whomsoever He wills - 35). It describes the deprivation of disbelievers from the Nūr of guidance, which they lost by denying the injunctions of Allah, and when they have lost Allah's Nūr of guidance how can they get any other Nūr.

This verse also explains that no one can become a perspicacious

scholar merely by having resource of insight and knowledge, rather it is bestowed by the grace of Allah only. It is for this reason that those who are regarded naïve in mundane matters prove themselves very knowledgeable and scholarly in the cognizance of the Hereafter. And, vice versa, many who are regarded very intelligent and knowledgeable in worldly matters, prove themselves completely ignorant and foolish in the perception and comprehension of the Hereafter. (Maḡharī)

Verses 41 - 45

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْبِغْ لَهُ، مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالطَّيْرِ صَفَّتْ ۖ
كُلُّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهُ، وَتَسْبِيحَهُ، ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٤١﴾
وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٤٢﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ
اللَّهَ يُزْجِي سَحَابًا ثُمَّ يُؤَلِّفُ بَيْنَهُ، ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ رُكَامًا فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ
يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلَالِهِ ۚ وَيُنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ جِبَالٍ فِيهَا مِنْ بَرَدٍ
فَيُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَصْرِفُهُ، عَنْ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۖ يَكَادُ سَنَا بَرْقُهُ
يَذْهَبُ بِالْأَبْصَارِ ﴿٤٣﴾ يُقَلِّبُ اللَّهُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً
لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَ كُلَّ دَابَّةٍ مِنْ مَّاءٍ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ
يَمْشِي عَلَى بَطْنِهِ ۖ وَ مِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَمْشِي عَلَى رِجْلَيْنِ ۚ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ
يَمْشِي عَلَى أَرْبَعٍ ۖ يَخْلُقُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
قَدِيرٌ ﴿٤٥﴾

Did you not realize that purity of Allah is proclaimed by all those in the heavens and the earth, and by the birds with their wings spread out? Everyone knows one's own (way of) praying (to Allah) and one's own (way of) proclaiming Allah's purity. And Allah knows well what they do. [41] And to Allah belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and towards Allah is the final return. [42]

Do you not realize that Allah drives the clouds, then

joins them together, then turns them into a heap? Then you see the rain coming out from their midst. And He sends down from the sky mountains (of clouds) having hail in them, then He afflicts with it whomsoever He wills and turns it away from whomsoever He wills. The flash of its lightning seems to snatch away the eyes. [43] Allah alternates the night and the day. Surely, in that there is a lesson for those who have eyes to see. [44]

And Allah has created every moving creature from water. So, some of them move on their bellies; and some of them move on two legs and some of them move on four. Allah creates what He wills. Surely, Allah is powerful over everything. [45]

Commentary

كُلُّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهُ، وَتَسْبِيحَهُ (Everyone knows one's own (way of) praying - 41). In the beginning of the verse it is said that every creature on earth and heavens and in between them is busy in the glorification and sanctification of Allah Ta'ālā. The meaning of Tasbīḥ is explained by Sufyān رحمه الله تعالى that Allah Ta'ālā has created every thing in this universe like earth, heavens, sun, moon, stars, water, fire, air or sand with purpose, and they are all performing all the time the task they are assigned. They cannot refuse to perform their assigned job. This obedience and submission to carry out the assigned job is referred here as Tasbīḥ. Hence, their Tasbīḥ is by action and not by words. By their actions they are confirming that they are performing this worship because they believe Allah Ta'ālā to be Pure and Almighty.

Zamakhsharī and some other commentators have, on the other hand, elaborated that it is not improbable that Allah Ta'ālā has placed so much sense and understanding in everything that they do recognize their Creator and Master. And it is also not improbable that He has taught them some sort of speech, and some special Tasbīḥ and worship in which they keep themselves busy. There is an allusion towards this point in the last sentence كُلُّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهُ (Every one knows one's own {way of} praying and proclaiming Allah's purity - 41). It indicates that all creatures are busy in Tasbīḥ and worship of Allah Ta'ālā, but the manner of worship of each creature is different. Angels worship in a different manner, humans worship differently, trees and vegetation also worship differently, and

the rocks and minerals yet in another manner. Another verse of the Holy Qur'an also confirms this view when it says اَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى (He who gave everything its shape, then guidance - 20:50) that is 'Allah Ta'ālā created everything and then given guidance to them'. The guidance is that everything is obeying Allah and performing its assigned duty diligently. Apart from this, everything has been guided how to fulfill the need of its existence with such perfection that even the best of minds get boggled. How creative and complicated nests and holes they make for their living, and how they strive and work hard to find and collect their food is in itself a great wonder.

مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ جِبَالٍ فِيهَا

From the sky mountains (of clouds) having hail in them - 43.

Here the word سَمَاء is purported for clouds, and Jibāl (mountains) for big masses of clouds, while hails are called Barad.

Verses 46 - 54

لَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا آيَاتٍ مُبَيِّنَاتٍ ۖ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَيَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَبِالرَّسُولِ وَأَطَعْنَا ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّى فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ ۖ وَمَا أُولَٰئِكَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَإِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَبِينُ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ يَأْتُوا إِلَيْهِ مُذْعِنِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾ أَفَى قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ أَمْ ارْتَابُوا أَمْ يَخَافُونَ أَنْ يَحِيفَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَرَسُولُهُ ۚ بَلْ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ إِنَّمَا كَانَ قَوْلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ يَقُولُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَخْشَ اللَّهَ وَيَتَّقْهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ أَمَرْتَهُمْ لَيَخْرُجُنَّ ۚ قُلْ لَا تُقْسِمُوا ۚ طَاعَةٌ مَّعْرُوفَةٌ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾ قُلْ

أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ ۚ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حُمِّلَ
وَعَلَيْكُمْ مَا حُمِّلْتُمْ وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوهُ تَهْتَدُوا ۚ وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا
الْبَلْغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٥٤﴾

We have surely sent down enlightening verses. And Allah guides whom He wills to the straight path. [46]

And they say, 'We have believed in Allah and in the messenger and have taken to obedience', then a group from them goes back after all this. And those are no believers. [47] And when they are summoned to Allah and His messenger that he (the messenger) may judge between them, in no time a group of them turns averse. [48] And if the right is theirs, they would come to him as (if they are) submissive ones. [49] Is there a malady in their hearts or do they have doubt or do they fear that Allah and His messenger will do injustice to them? Rather they themselves are the unjust. [50] The only reply of the (true) believers, when they are summoned to Allah and His messenger that he (the messenger) may judge between them, is that they say, 'We listen and obey.' And such people are the successful. [51] And whoever obeys Allah and His messenger and has awe of Him and observes Taqwā of Him, then such people are the victorious. [52]

And they (the hypocrites) swear by Allah on eloquent oaths that if you (O prophet) order them, they will certainly leave (their homes for Jihād). Say, 'do not swear, (the reality of your) obedience is known. Indeed Allah is fully aware of what you do.' [53]

Say, 'Obey Allah and obey the messenger. But if you turn away, then on him (the messenger) lies (the responsibility of) what he is burdened with and on you lies (the responsibility of) what you are burdened with. And if you obey him, you will get the right path. And the messenger is responsible for nothing more than to convey the message clearly.' [54]

Commentary

These verses were revealed on a special occasion. Ṭabari and others

have related the incident saying that there was a hypocrite by the name Bishr, who had some dispute and enmity with a Jew over a piece of land. The Jew suggested to him to take their dispute before the Holy Prophet ﷺ for the judgement, but Bishr, the hypocrite knew well that he was on the wrong and if the dispute was taken to the Holy Prophet ﷺ he will definitely decide the case on merit, and he will lose the case. So, he did not agree with the suggestion and instead asked the Jew to take it to Ka'b Ibn Ashraf, another Jew. On this point these verses were revealed. In verse اَفِى قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ (Is there any malady in their hearts - 50) the disease of firm infidelity or the doubt on prophethood have been negated to point out that this doubt and infidelity were not the real cause of evasion to take the dispute in the court of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Although the infidelity and doubt on prophethood among the hypocrites is obvious and proven, but the underlying cause was that he (Bishr) knew well that if the case was placed before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he would definitely lose it, because he would decide the case on merit.

Four conditions for success and victory

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَخْشَ اللَّهَ وَيَتَّقْهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ

And whoever obeys Allah and His messenger and has awe of Him and observes Taqwā of Him, then such people are the victorious. [52]

In this verse it is declared that those who bind themselves to follow these four things are the ones who are successful and victorious in this world and the Hereafter.

An astonishing incident

An incident of Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ is reported in Tafsīr Qurṭubī, which explains the difference between these four things and puts them in right perspective. It so happened that one day Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ was standing in the Prophet's ﷺ mosque, when suddenly a Roman villager appeared and stood beside him, and said انا اشهد ان لا اله الا الله واشهد ان محمداً رسول الله. Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ inquired 'What is the matter?' He replied 'I have accepted Islam for Allah's sake'. Then Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ asked if there was any reason for that, to which he replied in the affirmative, and elaborated that he had read Torah, Injīl, Zabūr and a number of other books brought by past messengers. But lately he had heard a verse of the Holy Qur'ān recited by a Muslim prisoner and realized that in that small

verse all the older books have been condensed. So, he was convinced that it was Allah's revelation. Then Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ enquired from him about the verse he was referring to, and he recited this very verse. That Roman villager also gave a very astonishing commentary of the verse, which goes like this:

مَنْ يُطِيعَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَخْشَ اللَّهَ وَيَتَّقِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ

And whoever obeys Allah and His messenger and has awe of Him and observes Taqwā of Him, then such people are the victorious. [52]

This مَنْ يُطِيعَ اللَّهَ relates to the obligations toward Allah, and وَرَسُولَهُ refers to Prophet's ﷺ traditions, and وَيَخْشَ اللَّهَ alludes toward past life and وَيَتَّقِهِ is purported for the remaining life. When someone acts upon these four things he is given the good tiding of الْفَائِزُونَ (that such people are the victorious). And Fa'iz is that person who gets deliverance from Jahannam and earns a place in the Paradise. After hearing this explanation Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ said the endorsement of this is available in the utterance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, who had said جوامع الكلم that is 'Allah has graced me with such comprehensive expressions in which words are few but the meanings are vast'. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 55 - 57

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي
الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ
الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي
لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾
وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَاطِيعُوا الرُّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تُرحَمُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَمَا لَهُمْ النَّارُ وَلَيْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٥٧﴾

Allah has promised those of you who believe and do good deeds that He will certainly make them (His)

vicegerents in the land, like He made those before them, and will certainly establish for them their religion that He has chosen for them and will certainly give them peace in exchange, after their state of fear; (provided that) they worship Me, ascribing no partner to Me. And whoever turns infidel after that, then such people are the transgressors. [55]

And establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh and obey the messenger so that you may be favored with mercy. [56] Never think that the disbelievers are (able) to frustrate (Allah's plan) on the earth. And their abode is the Fire. And indeed it is an evil terminus. [57]

Commentary

Background of Revelation

Qurtubī has reported on authority of Abul 'Āliyah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ stayed in Makkah for ten years after commencement of revelation and declaration of prophethood, during which time there was a constant fear of the infidels and disbelievers. Then after the Hijrah to Madina also there was a ceaseless danger of attacks from the disbelievers. So, someone asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ "Would a time come to us when we will be able to live in peace without wearing our weaponry?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied 'Yes, the time is coming very soon'. On that occasion these verses were revealed. (Qurtubī and Baḥr). Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has said that these verses relate the promise of Allah Ta'ālā, which He had made with the Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ before their creation in the Torah and the Injīl. (Baḥr Muḥīṭ)

Allah Ta'ālā had made three promises to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, that his Ummah will be made His vicegerent on earth and will rule over it, and His favourite religion Islam will be made victorious, and Muslims will be given so much power and grandeur that they will have no fear of any one. Allah Ta'ālā fulfilled His promise by conferring conquest over Makkah, Khaibar, Baḥrain, and the whole of Yemen and the entire peninsula of Arabia even during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Also he received *jizyah*, (capitation tax) from the Zoroastrians of Hajar and some Syrian territories. The kings and rulers of Rome, Egypt, Iskandria, Oman and Ethiopia sent gifts to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and gave him honour and respect. Then during his caliphate Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ

crushed all the menacing uprisings. He also sent out Islamic armies to Persia, Syria and Egypt. Buṣrā and Damascus also fell to Islamic State during this time.

When the time of death of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ approached nearer, Allah Ta'ālā put an inspiration in his heart to nominate Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ؓ as his successor. When Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ؓ took charge of the caliphate, it was so wonderful that the heavens had not witnessed such grand governance after the governance of the messengers. During his caliphate the entire land of Syria and Egypt and major part of Persia were overpowered. It was during his time that the grandeur of Caesar and Chosroes were vanished. After that period, during the caliphate of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ؓ the Islamic victories extended from the East to the West. In the west up to Cyprus and Andalucia, and in the east up to China. Besides, 'Irāq, Khorasan and Ahwaz all fell to Islamic State during the time of third Caliph. What the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said according to a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth that he was shown the entire east and west of the earth by bringing them together, and that the rule of his Ummah will extend up to all those places which have been shown to him; this promise was fulfilled by Allah Ta'ālā even during the time of caliphate Sayyidna 'Uthmān . (Ibn Kathīr)

According to another *ḥadīth* the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that caliphate will last for thirty years after him. Here, the word caliphate means the Rightly Guided Caliphate (Al-Khilāfah-ar-Rāshidah), which was run exactly on the footsteps of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . It lasted up to the time of Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ, because this period of thirty years was finished after him.

At this point Ibn Kathīr has also reported a *ḥadīth* from Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, that Sayyidnā Jabir Ibn Samurah ؓ has said that he had heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying that his Ummah will continue ruling until the twelve caliphs last. After narrating this Ibn Kathīr has commented that this *ḥadīth* is pointing that there will be twelve upright caliphs in the Muslim Ummah, which is bound to happen. However, it is not necessary that all twelve come one after the other and there is no gap in between, rather it is more likely that they turn up with an interval of time. Out of this lot, four Rightly Guided Khulafā' had appeared one after the other immediately after the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The next was Sayyidnā

‘Umar Ibn ‘Abdul ‘Azīz ؓ who came after a gap of some time. A few others also appeared in different times after him and will continue to come until the last caliph Sayyidnā Mahdiyy comes. There is no mention in the *ḥadīth* of those twelve caliphs which the Shiites have determined. Rather some of them are those who have no connection with the caliphate at all. It is also not necessary that all of them would be of the same status, and during their time there would be complete peace and tranquility. This promise is related to rectitude and firmness of faith, the righteous deeds and total obedience, and any difference in their degree will naturally make difference in the power and control of authority. Islamic history spread over a period of 1400 years is a witness that in different times and different countries whenever and wherever there was a just and righteous ruler, he has received his share from this promise of Allah based on the extent of righteous deeds he has performed. At another place, the Qur’ān says *إِنَّ جُزْءَ اللَّهِ هُمْ الْعَالِيُونَ* that is ‘The people of Allah are the ones to prevail.’

This verse is a proof of approval and esteem in the sight of Allah of the four rightly guided Khulafā’

This verse is also a proof of the prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, because the forecast he had made came true exactly in the manner he had predicted. The same way it is also a proof of acceptance and approval of the caliphate of Al-Khulafā’ ar-Rāshidīn in the sight of Allah. It is for the simple reason that the promise Allah Ta‘ālā had made with His Messenger ﷺ and his Ummah was completely fulfilled during the lifetime of the four Ṣaḥābah. If the caliphate of the earlier caliphs is not regarded legitimate and true, as claimed by some Rawāfiq, then the Qur’ānic promise has not been fulfilled as yet. Then the argument put forward by Rawāfiq that the Qur’ānic promise will be fulfilled during the life of Sayyidnā Mahdiyy is but ridiculous, as it will amount to saying that for full 1400 years the ‘Ummah will live in disgrace and misery, and nearing the Dooms Day when he will get the rule, only that period is referred by this promise. The fact of the matter is that the conditions of faith and righteous deeds, on which this promise was made by Allah Ta‘ālā, were present in these Ṣaḥābah to the perfection and in totality. In reality Allah’s promise was fulfilled in totality in their lifetime only. After that neither the degree of faith and deeds was maintained at that level, nor

the dignity of caliphate and governance could be retained.

وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

And whoever turns infidel after that, then such people are the transgressors - 24:55.

The literal meaning of the word Kufr is thanklessness and in conventional sense it is the antonym of faith. In this verse there is room for taking either of the two meanings. Thus the meaning of the verse is that when Allah Ta'ālā fulfills His promise and bestows power, authority, peace and satisfaction to the Muslims, and stability to Islam, and after that someone turns apostate or avoids obeying the rules of the Islamic State, then such a person is a transgressor. In the first place he has lost the faith, and secondly, stopped obeying the rules and regulations of the Islamic State. Kufr and ingratitude are great sins in any situation, but after the establishment of Islamic rule, authority and grandeur the intensity of these sins is doubled. That is why it is emphasized by the words بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ (after that). Imām Baghawī has said that the scholars of Tafsīr have explained that this Qur'ānic sentence came true for the first time on those who assassinated the ruling caliph Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ؓ. When they committed this great sin, the referred graces of Allah Ta'ālā were reduced, and they were afflicted with fear and fright because of mutual killings and massacre. Despite the fact that they were like brothers to each other, they got involved in mutual killing. Baghawī has related on his own authority an address by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Salām ؓ, which he delivered at the time of commotion against Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ؓ. The wordings of the address are as follows:

"The angels of Allah had cordoned your city for security ever since the Holy Prophet ﷺ had come to Madīnah, and this measure was continuing until today. By God, if you assassinate 'Uthmān ؓ, these angels will go back, and will never return again. By god, whoever from you will kill him will present himself before Allah with his hands cut. He will be without his hands. And know that Allah's sword was in its sheath so far. By God, if this sword comes out of its sheath, it shall never go back in sheath again, because whenever a messenger is assassinated, seventy thousand people are killed in return and when a caliph is assassinated, then thirty five thousand persons are killed" (Maẓharī).

Hence, the sequence of mutual killing which had commenced with the Shahadah (martyrdom) of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ؓ has continued in the Ummah throughout. Similarly, the way assassins of 'Uthmān ؓ acted against the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā and solidarity of Islam and were ungrateful to Him, the Rawāfiḍ and Khawārij did the same after that by grouping against the Guided Khulafā'. The incident of great sacrifice of Sayyidnā Husain Ibn Ali ؓ also happened under the same sequence.

نَسَّالَ اللّٰهُ الْهَدَايَةَ وَشَكَرَ نِعْمَتَهُ

Verses 58 - 60

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِيَسْتَأْذِنُكُمُ الَّذِينَ مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ
يَبْلُغُوا الْحُلُمَ مِنْكُمْ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ ۖ مِنْ قَبْلِ صَلَاةِ الْفَجْرِ وَحِينَ
تَضَعُونَ ثِيَابَكُمْ مِنَ الظَّهِيرَةِ وَمِنْ بَعْدِ صَلَاةِ الْعِشَاءِ ۚ ثَلَاثُ
عَوْرَاتٍ لَكُمْ ۚ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا عَلَيْهِمْ جُنَاحٌ ۖ بَعْدَ هُنَّ ۚ طُوفُونَ
عَلَيْكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ ۚ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ
عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَإِذَا بَلَغَ الْأَطْفَالُ مِنْكُمْ الْحُلُمَ فَلْيَسْتَأْذِنُوا كَمَا
اسْتَأْذَنَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ
حَكِيمٌ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَالْقَوَاعِدُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ الَّتِي لَا يَرْجُونَ نِكَاحًا فَلَيْسَ
عَلَيْهِنَّ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ يَضَعْنَ ثِيَابَهُنَّ غَيْرَ مُتَبَرِّجَاتٍ ۖ بِزِينَةٍ ۚ وَأَنْ
يَسْتَغْفِنَ خَيْرٌ لَهُنَّ ۚ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٠﴾

O those who believe, the slaves owned by you and those of you who have not reached puberty must seek your permission (to see you) at three times: before the prayer of Fajr, when you take off your clothes at noon and after the prayer of 'Ishā'. These are three times of privacy for you. There is no harm, neither to you nor to them after these (three times). They are your frequent visitors as some of you are (frequent visitors) of the others. This is how Allah explains the verses to you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [58]

And when the children from among you reach puberty, they must seek permission as the permission is sought by those before them. This is how Allah explains His verses to you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [59]

And those old women who have no hope for marriage, there is no sin on them if they take off their (extra) clothes while they do not display their adornment. And that they refrain (even from this) is better for them. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [60]

Commentary

It has been described in the beginning of this Sūrah that the injunctions of Sūrah Nūr mostly relate to prevention of obscenity and vulgarity. Under the same sequence some injunctions regarding social etiquette and mutual meetings are also enjoined. After that the injunctions about Ḥijāb for women are prescribed.

The injunction for relatives and *maḥrams* for seeking permission at specific timings

Earlier in this Sūrah the social etiquette and manners for mutual meetings were described in verses 27, 28 and 29 under the heading 'injunctions on seeking permission', where it was enjoined that if you go to visit someone, do not enter the house without taking permission. Irrespective of the situation whether it is a female section of the house or the male section, and whether the visitor is a man or a woman, it has been made obligatory on every one to seek permission before entering the house. However, these injunctions relate to those who come in the house as visitors. But in the present verses a different type of *isti'dhān* is enjoined. Here those persons are instructed to seek permission who live together in the same house and keep roaming in the rooms freely. In this category those men are also included with whom the *ḥijāb* of women is not required (the *maḥrams*). They, too, are advised to make some sort of sound, either by cleaning the throat or by thumping of steps, in order to make their presence felt. This type of *isti'dhān* is preferable and not obligatory, but to give it up is *Makrūh Tanzīhī*. Tafsīr Maḥzarī has remarked:

فمن اراد الدخول فى بيت نفسه وفيه محرماته يكره له الدخول فيه من غير
استئذان تنزيها لاحتمال رؤية واحدة منهن عريانة وهو احتمال ضعيف ومقتضاه
التنزه. (مظهرى)

The one who intends to enter his own house, while it is occupied by his maḥram ladies, it is not desirable (*makrūh tanzīhī*) for him to enter it without seeking permission, because of the possibility that one of those ladies is without clothes. However, since this possibility is a remote one, it requires precaution only (and not Prohibition).

This injunction relates to the time before entering the house, but once men-folk have entered the house, all the inmates live together and being members of the same family keep meeting each other within the house. For the family members living together there is another injunction of seeking permission at three specific times, which are the times of privacy. These three times are before the Fajr prayers, the resting time in the afternoon and in the night after 'Ishā' prayers. At these times all the *maḥrams* and relatives, even the young children and slave girls having sense, are prohibited to enter the private places without taking permission. It is to ensure that none should go in the private rooms without first seeking the permission. At these times one wants to be on one's own and sometimes takes off the extra clothes, while at times one is in a compromising position with his wife. During any of these situations one would feel very embarrassed and upset if seen by even a very young but sensible child or a woman of the household. In the least it will cause him disturbance in his rest. Hence, there is a need to take permission at these three specific times before entering the private chambers. After this injunction it is said (58) لَا يَسْ عَلَيكُمْ وَلَا عَلَيْهِمْ جُنَاحٌ، بَعْدَ هُنَّ that is besides these times there is no harm if you go to each other without any permission, because during all other times people are busy doing their normal duties and are properly attired in their usual clothing. These are also not the normal times for intimacy with the wife.

Here the question arises that enforcement of injunction on adult man and woman is normal, but why the young children are also commanded to comply with this injunction, which is not the normal practice.

The answer to this confusion is that in actual fact it is the adult men and women who are charged with this duty to explain to the young children not to go to private chambers at these times without taking permission. It is in the same manner as a *ḥadīth* instructs to teach the prayers to children when they attain the age of seven years and persuade them to offer it. And when they attain the age of ten years they be bound

down to offer prayers regularly, and if they default then they should be beaten to be regular in their prayers. Similarly, the injunction of *isti'dhān* in the above verse is actually for the adult men and women. In the sentence under discussion the word *Junāḥ* is used to say that apart from these three times there is no harm if the inmates go in the private chambers without permission. Generally the word *Junāḥ* is used for sin, but sometimes it is also used for harm or obstacle. Here in this verse it is used for the latter meaning, hence, any doubt of sinning on the part of children is also removed. (Bayān ul-Qur'ān)

Ruling

The phrase *الَّذِينَ مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ* (the slaves owned by you) used in verse (58) covers the meaning of both the slaves and the slave girls. Among them the adult slaves fall under the category of non-Maḥrams under the Islamic law. As has been explained earlier, the mistress owner woman of an adult slave is obligated to be in ḥijāb before him. Therefore, the phrase is purported to mean here the slave girls and minor slaves who roam about in the house freely.

Ruling

The scholars and jurists have different viewpoints on the question whether this type of *isti'dhān* is obligatory or merely commendable and whether this injunction is still valid or is abrogated. Majority of jurists have ruled that this verse is firm and thus not abrogated, and the injunction is obligatory both for men and women (Qurṭubī). But it is obvious that the reason and ground for the injunction to be obligatory is that which is given above, that is, one wants to be on his own at these three times and likes privacy, and sometimes gets busy with his wife. However, if people could get into the habit of keeping their concealable parts covered even at these three times, and be careful to copulate with wife only at times when there is no possibility of any one coming in, as is the norm these days, then it is not obligatory to restrain the relatives and children from entering without *isti'dhān*. In this situation it is no more obligatory for the relatives to follow it. But there is no doubt that it is a desirable and commendable act, though it seems that people have given it up for a long time. According to one narration Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has used very strong words for ignoring it, and according to another narration he has put forward excuses for those who do not follow it.

The first narration is reported by Ibn Kathīr on authority of Ibn Abī Ḥatīm that Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ has said that there are three verses which people have stopped following. One of them is this very verse of *istidhān* يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِيَسْتَأْذِنَكُمْ الَّذِينَ مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ (58) in which relatives and young children are instructed to seek permission. The second verse is وَإِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ أُولُو الْقُرْبَىٰ (4:8) in which people are advised to hand over a part of the inheritance to those relatives also who are present at the time of division of patrimony but have no claim on it, in order to console them. The third verse is إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ in which it is declared that the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the most god-fearing of you. But these days such persons are regarded honorable and respectable who possess plenty of wealth and palatial houses. According to some other narration Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ has also said that in respect of these three verses the Satan has overpowered the people. Then he said “I have restrained even my slave girl not to come to me without permission at these three times”.

The second narration is also reported on authority of Ibn Abī Ḥatīm by Sayyidnā ‘Ikrimah ؓ that two persons enquired from Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ about *isti’dhān* enjoined (by this verse) upon near relatives and commented that people have stopped acting on this. Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ replied إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَتِيرٌ يَحِبُّ السِّرَّ that Allah keeps cover on many things, and He likes the same for others. The fact of the matter is that at the time of revelation of this verse the society was very simple. People did not use curtains at the door nor did they have large beds with curtains. There used to be occasions when a child or servant would come in unannounced at a time the person was in a compromising position with his wife. It was to prevent such happenings that Allah Ta‘ālā sent down this injunction to take permission at these three times. But now people use curtains at the door and large beds having curtains, which is considered enough for the purpose. Now there is no need for *isti’dhān*. (Having reproduced this narration Ibn Kathīr has said – هذا اسناد صحيح الى ابن عباس (that is, the chain of its narrators is ‘Ṣaḥīḥ’ i.e. authentic). In the light of this narration ascribed to Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ one thing is quite clear that when there is no apprehension of any one seeing the other in an uncovered position or involved with his wife, in that case some concession is allowed.

But Qur’an teaches for a pure society so that no one interferes in

anyone's freedom and everybody lives in peace and comfort. Those who do not make their family members follow the practice of seeking permission they themselves face inconvenience and curb their natural instincts and desires.

Emphasis on *ḥijāb* for women and an exemption

The injunction on *ḥijāb* for women has already appeared earlier in detail in two verses, and two exemptions were also mentioned there. One exemption relates to the one who is seeing, and the other to that who is seen. According to the first exemption, young children and the slave girls are exempt. As for the second exemption, the outward adornment is exempt from *ḥijāb*, which includes outer clothing like veil or covering sheet. There is agreement of all on this, but according to some, women's face and palms are also included in this exemption

In the next verse the third exemption is granted on the basis of a woman's personal situation. If a woman has grown so old that no one would have any (sexual) desire towards her, nor is she marriageable, for such a woman concession in *ḥijāb* is allowed in that even strangers (non-Maḥrams) are treated like *maḥrams* for her. She is not required to cover those parts of her body before non-Maḥrams which are not required to be covered before *maḥrams*. Hence, it is said وَالْقَوَاعِدُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ الَّتِي (And those old women who have no hope for marriage - 60). The explanation of this verse is already given above. Although very old women are allowed to uncover those parts of their body before non-Maḥrams which are not required to be covered before *maḥrams*, yet this exemption is allowed with the condition that they do so without applying any makeup or adornment. The other thing said in the last is وَأَنْ يَسْتَغْفِنَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُنَّ (60) that is, it is better for them if they avoid going before non-Maḥrams altogether.

Verse 61

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْأَعْرَجِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ
حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ آبَائِكُمْ
أَوْ بُيُوتِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ إِخْوَانِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخَوَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ
أَعْمَامِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ عَمَّاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخَوَالِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ خَالَاتِكُمْ

أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتُمْ مَفَاتِحَهُ ۖ أَوْ صَدِيقُكُمْ ۚ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا
 جَمِيعًا أَوْ أَشْتَاتًا ۚ فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمْ بُيُوتًا فَسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ تَحِيَّةٌ
 مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُبْرَكَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ ۚ كَذَلِكَ يَبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ
 تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

There is no blame on a blind person, nor is there any blame on any lame one, nor is there any blame on a patient, nor on yourselves in that you eat (something) from your own homes or from the homes of your fathers or the homes of your mothers or the homes of your brothers or the homes of your sisters or the homes of your paternal aunts or the homes of your maternal uncles or the homes of your maternal aunts or from the places the keys of which you have under your control or from (the home of) your friend. There is no sin on you if you eat together or separately. So when you enter homes, greet your own selves with Salām, a greeting prescribed by Allah which is blessed, pleasant. This is how Allah explains the verses to you so that you may understand. [61]

Commentary

Some injunctions and social etiquettes after the entry in the house

In the previous verses it was enjoined to seek permission before entering into anyone's house. In the above verse those injunctions and etiquettes are pronounced which are obligatory or preferable to follow after the permission to enter the house is granted. Before understanding the injunction contained in this verse and its purport it would be advisable to know the background in which this verse was revealed.

Every Muslim knows very well how much emphasis is laid by the Holy Qur'ān and the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ for respecting and preserving the rights of the people (Ḥuqūq ul-'Ibād). Very strong warnings are sounded against using anything owned by someone else without his permission. On the other hand Allah Ta'ālā had chosen such fortunate persons for the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that they were all ears for any command from Allah or His Messenger. They were always

ready to put in their best on every single command. By following Qur'ānic teachings diligently and having the exalted company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ they were turned by Allah Ta'ālā into a group of whom even the angels were proud. Not to think ever to spend even slightly from other's wealth, to avoid putting in anyone into the slightest of trouble and to remain steadfast on the highest standard of Taqwā (constant awareness of Allah) were only some of the attributes of the companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Some related incidents had taken place during the life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, in which connection the injunctions contained in the present verse were revealed. All commentators have made reference of these incidents with the difference that different incidents are quoted as the cause of revelation by different commentators. The actual position is that there is no contradiction in their assertions, and all these incidents put together are the cause of revelation of this verse. The incidents are as follows:

Imām Baghawī رحمه الله has related on authority of Sa'īd Ibn Jubair رحمه الله and some other commentators that it is a common habit among people to feel disgust in eating together with lame, cripple, blind and sick, and avoid it. Among the companions who had any of these disability thought that if they were to eat with others they might cause botheration and trouble to them. Therefore, they started avoiding to eat with normal persons. The blind people thought that they might eat more than others, as they cannot see, causing injustice for the rest. Justice requires that all who eat together should eat equally. Likewise, the lame thought that they would create problem for others as they could not sit properly and occupy more space, which will result in taking up the share of space of others. In this background, the above verse was revealed in which the disabled were asked to join other normal persons for eating. They were advised not to take upon themselves such painstaking precautionary measures which could lead them into trouble.

Imam Baghawī has narrated another incident related by Ibn Jarīr on authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه which presents the other side of the picture. The story goes like this; when the verse لَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ (Do not eat up each other's property by false means - 2:188) was revealed, people were hesitant to eat with the blind, lame and the sick. Their consideration was that the sick eats less because of his indisposition, so he

would suffer if he eats with others. The blind cannot differentiate between the good and ordinary food, and the lame is slow to eat because of his posture. So, people thought there is a possibility that the disabled are deprived of their due share, whereas the justice demands that all should eat equally while eating together. So, it was in this background that this verse was revealed, and people were taken out of this predicament. The spirit behind this injunction is that people should eat together and if there is a little disparity in the quantity of food taken by each one of them, it should not be a cause of botheration.

Sa'īd Ibn al-Musayyab رحمه الله تعالى has given yet another version that while going on *jihād* or battles, the Muslims used to hand over the keys of their houses to the disabled with the instructions that they can eat whatever is there in the house. On the other hand, the disabled would not eat anything, lest they spend something against the wishes of the owners. Hence, to counter this position, the above verse was revealed. Musnad al-Bazzār has also reported this version on the authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to go on a battle, it was the desire of every companion to go along with him to participate in the battle. They used to hand over the keys of their houses to the poor and disabled persons with the permission that they could eat anything available in the house during their absence. But the disabled would abstain from taking anything from the house fearing that the permission given to them to eat freely from the house might not have been given with full willingness. Baghawī has also narrated on authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that the word صَدِيقُكُمْ (your friend) used in the verse, which means that there is no harm in eating from your friend's house, was a reference toward the incident of Ḥārith b. 'Amr ؓ. The incident was that Ḥārith b. 'Amr ؓ went for *jihād* along with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, leaving the care and custody of his house to his friend, Mālik Ibn Zaid ؓ. When Ḥārith ؓ returned, he noticed that Mālik Ibn Zaid ؓ had become very weak. When he enquired the reason of the weakness, Mālik ؓ replied that he did not feel it right to eat anything from his house. (All these narrations are taken from Tafsīr Maḥzarī). Indeed all these incidents had a bearing on the revelation of this verse.

Ruling

As mentioned above, a general permission was granted in this verse to

eat in certain houses without asking special consent. This permission was granted on the basis of a tradition among 'Arabs to eat freely in the houses of close relatives. There was absolutely no formality among them, and no one would ever mind this habit, rather they used to encourage it and would feel happy about it. Not only that, sometimes the relatives used to bring poor, sick or needy persons and feed them at houses of others, on which the hosts would feel happy. According to custom they would not seek special permission for this, as there was a general consent among them to follow the tradition. It therefore becomes obvious that wherever and whenever this tradition is not in vogue, or the owner's consent is doubtful, then eating without permission is forbidden. In the present time no one would like that even a close relative would eat in his house without seeking permission. Therefore, the permission granted in this verse would not apply, unless some one is absolutely sure that his eating in a relative's house would not cause any problem or displeasure, rather he would enjoy it. Only in this situation eating at such a house would be permissible under the dictate of this verse.

Ruling

It is now clear from the above statement that it is not right to say that this injunction was meant for the early days of Islam, and was abrogated later. The injunction is in force right from the beginning up to the date and shall always remain effective. The real condition of the application of this injunction is the certainty of permission of the owner of the house, and if that is not present, then the very basis of injunction is not available. (Maḏharī).

Ruling

It has also now become clear that this injunction is not restricted only to the relatives specified in the verse, but the concession is applicable to other persons also, with the sole condition that it is certain that the owner of the house will be pleased and will not be offended if someone eats and also makes others eat without seeking prior permission. (Maḏharī) These injunctions relate to the acts permitted or preferable on entering in someone's house after taking permission. The act of eating and drinking has been mentioned first due to its importance. The second act (mentioned in verse 64) relates to the etiquettes of entry.

The etiquette demands that as one enters the house with permission,

he should greet all the Muslims present there with salām. This is the purport of the words "greet your own selves", (verse 61). It is because all Muslims are a single united group. In many Ṣaḥīḥ Ahadis great emphasis is laid on Muslims for greeting each other as an act of virtue.

Verses 62 - 64

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِذَا كَانُوا مَعَهُ عَلَى أَمْرٍ جَامِعٍ لَّمْ يَذْهَبُوا حَتَّى يَسْتَأْذِنُوهُ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۚ فَإِذَا اسْتَأْذَنُوكَ لِبَعْضِ شَأْنِهِمْ فَأَذَنْ لِّمَن شِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٦٢﴾ لَا تَجْعَلُوا دُعَاءَ الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَاءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا ۚ قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ يَتَسَلَّلُونَ مِنْكُمْ لِوَاذًا ۚ فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾ أَلَا إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ قَدْ يَعْلَمُ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ ۚ وَيَوْمَ يُرْجَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٤﴾

The believers are only those who believe in Allah and His messenger and who, when they are with him for a collective matter, do not leave unless they seek his permission. Surely, those who seek your permission are the ones who believe in Allah and His messenger. So, if they seek permission from you for some business of theirs, give permission to whom you wish from among them, and pray to Allah for their forgiveness. Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [62]

Do not take the call of the messenger among you as a call of one of you to another. Allah definitely knows those of you who sneak out, covering one another. So, those who violate his (messenger's) order must beware, lest they are visited by a trial or they are visited by a painful punishment. [63]

Remember! To Allah belongs all that is there in the

heavens and the earth. He knows the condition you are in; and the Day on which they will be returned to Him, He will tell them what they did. And Allah is fully aware of everything. [64]

Commentary

Some etiquettes and injunctions in regard to meetings with the Holy Prophet ﷺ in particular, and in the society in general

The above verses contain two injunctions. The first injunction is that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ call people for the meeting in connection with *jihād* or any other religious matter, the demand of the faith is that all should attend and must not leave the meeting without his permission. If there is an emergency, permission may be sought from the Holy Prophet ﷺ, who was advised that unless there is special need and requirement, permission may be granted on such requests. In the same connection those hypocrites are condemned who would come to attend the meeting only to fulfill the obligation of faith, but would quietly sneak out under the cover of some other person.

This verse was revealed at the time of the battle of Aḥzāb, when the Arab disbelievers and other groups joined together and suddenly attacked Madīnah. After consultations with the companions, the Holy Prophet ﷺ consented to dig up a trench to defend against the attack. For this reason this battle is also known as 'the battle of trench (Khandaq)'. This battle was fought in Shawwal 5th Hijra. (Qurṭubī)

Baihaqī and Ibn Ishāq have reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself had taken part in the digging of the trench. But the hypocrites used to come late in the first place, and after doing a little bit of work just to show their presence, would sneak away quietly. As against this all the believers were putting in their best, and in case of any need or emergency would take permission from the Holy Prophet ﷺ before leaving the work. At that point this verse was revealed. (Maḏharī)

A question and its answer

It appears from this verse that it is forbidden to get up and leave from the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ without seeking his permission. But there are several incidents when companions used to leave his meeting when they wished and would not deem it necessary to take his permission. The answer to this point is that the injunction mentioned in

the present verse is not an injunction for ordinary meetings, but it is meant for specific gatherings, which the Holy Prophet ﷺ might have called for some need, as was the case at the time of battle of the trench. The phrase عَلَىٰ أَمْرٍ جَامِعٍ (for a collective matter - 62) is itself pointing toward this exclusivity.

What does **أَمْرٍ جَامِعٍ** (collective matter) mean?

There are different views on this point. The most evident explanation is that this phrase is used for such acts for which the Holy Prophet ﷺ felt necessary to collect the people, as he regarded it important to collect the people for digging the trench on the occasion of battle of Aḥzāb. (Qurtubī - Maḥḥarī)

Is this injunction exclusive to meetings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or is general?

Since this injunction is issued for a religious and Islamic need, all the jurists agree that it is not exclusive to meetings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The same injunction would apply to any Imām or ruler of the Muslims who is in control of the government, if he called up a meeting. It is obligatory to attend the meetings called up by the rulers and it is not lawful to leave it without permission. (Qurtubī - Maḥḥarī - Bayān ul-Qurʾān) This is but obvious that this injunction has greater stress and emphasis for meetings called up by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and its opposition is open callousness. As for the common meetings and gatherings (not convened by a ruler), acting upon this injunction is surely preferable and commendable from the point of view of Islamic social etiquette. When Muslims are gathered in a meeting for deliberation or action on a collective issue, one should leave the meeting only after taking permission from the presiding person.

The second injunction

The second injunction is given in the last verse:

لَا تَجْعَلُوا دُعَاءَ الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ

Do not take the call of the messenger among you as a call of one of you to another - 24:63.

One explanation of this verse is that "call of the messenger" means calling of the people by the Holy Prophet ﷺ (which implies that "call" is the act of the messenger). Thus the meaning of the verse is, when the

Holy Prophet ﷺ call people, it should not be taken as a common call of an ordinary person, in which one has the choice to go or not to go. In the case of a call by the Holy Prophet ﷺ it becomes obligatory to go to him and leaving the meeting without his permission is unlawful. In the context of the verse the above explanation appears more appropriate. That is why Maẓharī and Bayān ul-Qur'ān have adopted this explanation. The other explanation of "call of the messenger" is related by Ibn Kathīr and Qurṭubī on authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ؓ. According to this explanation it means calling of the Holy Prophet ﷺ by the people for some need which implies that 'the messenger' is the object of the 'call'.

On the basis of this explanation the meaning of the verse would be that when you Call the Holy Prophet ﷺ for some need, do not call him by his name saying 'Yā Muḥammad يا محمد', as you call others. This is disrespect to him. Therefore, call him by an honorific form of address such as 'Yā Rasūl Allāh يا رسول الله' or 'Yā Nabīy Allāh يا نبي الله'. In the final analysis it is obligatory on all Muslims to have respect and veneration for the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to avoid all such things which are in conflict with respect and etiquette, or which may cause inconvenience to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This injunction is similar in nature to many of those enjoined in Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt, for instance لَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ (49:2) It means that when you talk to the Holy Prophet ﷺ keep in mind his respect, and do not talk in a loud voice, as people do while talking to each other. A similar example is إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُنَادُونَكَ مِنْ وَرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ (49:4) which means that when he ﷺ is inside the house, one must not call him out, rather wait for him outside until he comes out on his own.

A Warning

It has also been inferred from the second explanation that as a common etiquette it is incumbent upon Muslims to pay respect to the elders, and to call them by their names is disrespect. Elders should always be called with titles of respect.

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah An-Nūr
Ends here.